

# Suzuki in the Schools

## Philosophy

The Suzuki Association of the Americas, Suzuki in the Schools Committee recommends and encourages the utilization of the following aspects of the Suzuki method and philosophy for any elementary or secondary, public or private school program wishing to incorporate Suzuki into their instruction and curriculum.

The aspects are:

- Incorporate the Suzuki philosophy in the child's life
  - by realizing every child can learn
  - by creating a positive, supportive learning environment
  - by encouraging noble human values and
  - by encouraging positive personal, social and education values
- Use a common sequenced repertoire for all instruments
- Memorize the repertoire
- Review the repertoire to develop technical skills and musical expression
- Teach small step instruction of each skill
- Teach and reinforce mastery of each skill
- Teach group lessons in the "Suzuki Style"
- Promote daily listening and aural exposure to Suzuki repertoire and other good music
- Develop posture and basic technique before introducing note reading

The committee also recommends that:

Parents be involved in their child's education in a manner appropriate to the child's age.  
Parents be educated about Suzuki philosophy and how to facilitate a nurturing learning environment for their child.

## Basic Program Recommendations for Suzuki method in the Schools

Suzuki Association of the Americas Committee for Suzuki in the School, January 2006

### Philosophical Recommendations

- Suzuki instruction should begin as early as possible and be available to everyone.
- Instruments and instruction should be provided for students who cannot afford them.
- Teachers should have a thorough pedagogical background in Suzuki string teaching and be encouraged to pursue further training.
- Parent education should be developed in as many ways as possible.
- Parents should be encouraged to attend lessons and classes.
- Parents should be involved with daily home practice.



- Parents and teachers should provide listening at home.
- Teachers should provide listening to Suzuki repertoire and other good classical music in school whenever possible. (In any class, lunch, study time, etc.)
- Teachers should strive to incorporate Suzuki philosophy into their own teaching, into the lives of their students and into the school in general.
- Teachers should strive for the highest levels of student achievement, while developing the self-esteem of each child in a nurturing positive environment.
- Administrators and Board Members should be encouraged to take the SAA Suzuki Foundation course.

### **Instructional Recommendations**

- Lessons and classes should be offered during the school day so all children have access to instruction.
- Students in schools should receive:
  - One weekly individual lesson, 20-30 minutes depending on technical level. (This lesson can be scheduled 2 or 3 students at a time to allow for observation learning. This schedule works exceptionally well for beginners.)
  - One small, same instrument, group lesson 30-45 minutes depending on technical level.
  - One large ensemble or large group lesson. 45-60 minutes depending on technical level.
- Minimally, students should have Suzuki classes at least twice a week for at least 30 minutes.
- If the program specifications do not allow for individual lessons, class sizes should be kept as small as possible (5-10 students for small group classes). If the students are younger, class sizes should be smaller.
- If individual lessons are not possible, like instrument classes with small class sizes are very important.
- Teachers should teach a common sequenced repertoire.
- Teachers should facilitate repertoire review, memorization and performance until students can demonstrate mastery and ease.
- Teachers should also teach small step instruction of each skill, reinforce mastery of each skill, teach group lessons in the “Suzuki Style,” promote listening and aural exposure to repertoire and other good music, develop posture and basic technique before the introduction of note reading.

### **Funding Recommendations**

- Teacher salary and benefits should be the responsibility of the board of education and the school district so that all children can have access to Suzuki music education.
- Teachers should receive funding to pursue further Suzuki training & education.
- Teachers should receive an adequate budget to purchase, maintain, repair and replace instruments.
- Teachers should receive an adequate budget to purchase music and supplies.
- The Board of Education and the school district should make a long-term financial commitment to the program.
- Teacher/student ratio should be monitored so adequate staff can be added when program size increases.



## Physical Recommendations

- The Suzuki classroom needs to be a quiet, well lit, ventilated space dedicated to music instruction.
- A piano is useful in instrument classes.
- Carpeting is recommended for safety, for care of the instruments and for improving acoustics.
- Acoustics in the room should follow MENC specifications. When building a new facility, please consult the orchestra teacher and other specialists about acoustic treatment. Please refer to MENC specifications of classroom size, ceiling height and air return frequency.

## Successful Classroom/Program Models

The Suzuki method is used in multiple ways in public and private schools. Successful models feature repertoire memory and review, small step sequenced instruction and mastery learning in the curriculum. All successful models embrace the Suzuki philosophy and foster a positive learning environment for every child. The Suzuki approach can be successful in like instrument classes and mixed instrument classes.

### I. Traditional Suzuki

- Teachers teach Suzuki repertoire sequence in weekly private lessons and weekly group lessons.
- Group lessons are scheduled in homogeneous or like instrument classes.
- More advanced students may have an orchestra or chamber music ensemble class as well.
- Parents attend private lessons and are taught the Suzuki philosophy and teaching/practicing techniques.
- Parents practice with students daily and encourage daily listening at home.
- Parents have bowed and fingered music for home reference.
- Students learn repertoire by listening and by rote.
- Music reading is postponed until basic technique and intonation are developed.

### II. Modified Suzuki with Like Instrument Classes

- Teachers teach Suzuki repertoire in homogeneous or like instrument classes at least twice weekly.
- Parents are educated about the philosophy and method but are not always involved in lesson and practice.
- Students learn repertoire by listening and by rote.
- Students have bowed and fingered music for home reference.
- Home listening is encouraged.
- Music reading is postponed until basic technique and intonation are developed.
- Music reading is taught separately from instrument technique.



### III. Modified Suzuki in Mixed Instrument Classes

- Teachers teach Suzuki repertoire in heterogeneous/mixed instrument classes at least twice weekly.
- Students learn repertoire in same key, D major for most of vol. 1 (i.e. “Paul Zahtilla” book concept).
- Parents are educated about the philosophy and method but are not always involved in lessons.
- Students learn repertoire by listening and by rote.
- Students have bowed and fingered music for home reference.
- Home listening is encouraged.
- Music reading is postponed until basic technique and intonation are developed.
- Music reading is taught separately from instrument technique.

### IV. Suzuki Philosophy Mastery

Teachers teach orchestral and solo techniques with a “Mastery Approach” following the Suzuki philosophy.

- Students learn a technique or concept,
  - memorize the technique or concept,
  - demonstrate mastery of technique or concept,
  - review the technique or concept to develop ease and excellence.
- Students must demonstrate memorization and mastery of each technique before learning a new technique.
- Parents are educated about the philosophy and method but are not directly involved in lessons.
- Students learn technical and musical concepts by rote first.
- Students have bowed and fingered music for home reference.
- Home listening is encouraged.
- Music reading is postponed until basic technique and intonation are developed.
- Music reading is taught separately from instrument technique.

Originally developed for the older beginner (sixth grade orchestra class) but can be applied in a variety of settings and age levels.

The SAA Committee for Suzuki in the Schools recommends model #1 as the best model for children.

