

WKSA Beginning Strings Program—Violin, Viola and Cello

The FHSU Western Kansas String Academy's Beginning Strings Program is a blend of Suzuki, traditional and contemporary teaching methods for young children starting violin, viola, or cello. Students, ages Kindergarten and up, will learn the fundamentals of string playing in a relaxed and nurturing atmosphere. All areas of traditional string education will be explored, including facility, healthy posture, listening to and imitating beautiful tone, music reading, and elements of pitch and rhythm.

The program consists of three parts:

1. a weekly half-hour lesson with a private teacher and an accompanying parent,
2. a bi-monthly group class of like-instruments
3. optional music appreciation and rhythm classes

Students may start lessons at the beginning of the fall or spring semesters.

Parent Involvement Required for K-3rd parents; strongly encouraged for 4th grade and up.

Because a parent's involvement with their young child's music training is vital to the student's learning process and success, a parent must attend all private lessons and all group lessons with their child. In addition, parents will be expected to guide their student's daily home practice sessions, and to bring questions and concerns to their private or group instructor. In the initial weeks of the program, the accompanying parent will receive training for at-home practice through two or three group parent classes. While beginning practice requirements are relatively small (10 to 30 minutes per day, depending on age and attention span of child), being able to practice *daily* is very important to progress. As such, WKSA encourages parents to consider their family's schedule carefully before committing to the program.

Private Lessons

The weekly half-hour lessons will focus on the techniques of how to play the instrument correctly and comfortably while exploring music that children love. Instructors will use the Suzuki Method repertoire, initially relying on learning music by ear before developing note-reading skills. Significant time will be spent in early lessons ensuring proper position is mastered to avoid development of bad habits that may impede future progress.

Group Classes

The 50-minute, bi-monthly group classes serve to review skills and concepts already introduced in private lessons, to focus on specific skills needed for playing with others, and to encourage social interaction with other children playing like instruments. Listening and following a leader will serve as the primary emphasis, with the introduction of note-reading to follow, as the student's facility develops. Learning will be reinforced and confidence gained through group interaction and the use of musical games.

Beginning students move into their bi-monthly group class after some initial private lessons, and when their private teacher feels they are ready for the group setting. The classroom teacher, in consultation with the private teacher, will make recommendations for moving to the next group. (See attached Group Class Descriptions for additional details). Once a student has mastered the skills covered in the four group classes, they will be ready to move into WKSA's Beginning String Orchestra and other special ensembles offered by WKSA.

Group classes are typically offered on Saturday mornings.

Elective Classes

WKSA offers a variety of elective classes (Basic music theory, rhythm classes, music appreciation, etc) for beginning string players on Saturday mornings as a part of our regular program. Beginning students are encouraged to participate in these classes as well, and may sign up for them during our Registration Day each semester.

Needed Supplies

Please feel free to contact WKSA staff with any questions about instrument rental/purchase and sizing.

Instrument

Violin/Bow/Case, shoulder rest, rosin, soft cloth

Cello/Bow/Case, rock stop, rosin, soft cloth, armless chair or stool

(chair height should allow a 90 to 100 degree bend in knee when sitting on edge)

Suzuki Book with accompanying CD, Volume I

Parent Notebook (for taking lesson notes)

Costs

Cost for WKSA's Beginning String Program is \$300 per year (or \$165/semester), and includes the following:

22 private half-hour lessons (11 per semester)

12 group classes (6 per semester)

Participation in weekly elective classes (10 per semester)

Written skills mastery/progress report provided by instructor once a semester

Year-end group performance concert in Beach/Schmidt Performing Arts Center

Year-end educational juries for critique and advancement

Musical field trips/Social Activities

WKSA t-shirt

D'Addario Care Package (set of strings, rosin, polish cloth)

Fees may be paid in installments. Family discounts for multiple students, and financial assistance for eligible families is also available. Please contact WKSA staff for details.

Fall 2009 Group Class Schedule

New String Parents' Meetings

(Required for Level A Parents, but open to all)

Saturday, August 29th--Orientation Meeting, 9:30-10:30am

Saturday, September 19th, 9:00-9:50am

Saturday, September 26th, 9:00-9:50am

Level A Group Classes (9:00-9:50am)

October 10th

November 7th

December 12th

Level B Group Classes (9:00-9:50am)

September 19th

October 3rd

October 17th

October 31st

November 14th

December 5th

Classes resume January 16th, after Winter Break

Questions & Additional Information

Please contact Cathy Drabkin (785-628-5363; cadrabkin@fhsu.edu) for additional information or questions.

WKSA Group Class Details

Each class meets 6 times a semester. Students progress through the group classes as they master the skills and pieces covered in each level. The rate of progress through group classes is not pre-determined. Some students may be able to accomplish a Level per semester, others may take a year or longer.

Level A —Skills reviewed include instrument set up, bow hold, fingering, pizzicato, rhythmic bowing, left & right hands in combination, rhythm and pulse, Pre-Twinkle songs, Twinkle Variation A, French Folk Song, Lightly Row, D major scale (viola/cello) and A major scale (violin). The first three meetings are Parent Education Classes. The last three meetings are student classes. (Level A offered starting Fall 09, and every semester thereafter).

Level B —Skills reviewed include all those in the previous level plus string crossings, divided note values, martele bowing, D major (violin) and G major (viola/cello) scales, and Suzuki Book I songs (#1-4 for violin; #1-6 for cello). (Level B offered starting Fall 09, and then every semester).

Level C—Skills reviewed include all those in the previous levels plus dotted note values, dynamics, detache, G major (violin) and C major (viola/cello) scales, and Suzuki Book I songs (#5-8 for violin; #7-10 for cello). (Level C offered starting Fall 10, and then every semester).

Level D—Skills reviewed include all those in previous levels plus 2nd finger, 4th finger (violins/violins), arpeggiated string crossings, hooked bowings, slurs, spiccato, 2 octave G major (violin) and 2 octave C major (viola/cello) scales, and Suzuki Book I songs (#9-13 for violin/viola; #14-16 for cello). Note-reading skills will be stressed at this level. (Level D offered Spring 11, then every semester)

WKSA Beginning String Program Staff (Fall 2009)

Group Class Instructors—

Nathan Mark, violins and violas; Cathy Drabkin, cellos

Private Instructors—

Violins: Cody Custer, Shawn Demuth, Ashley Giersch

Violas: Cody Custer

Cellos: Cathy Drabkin