



## **Beginning Strings Policy Handbook**

2014-2015

Aspen Music Festival and School

Aspen, CO

## **Important Contact Information:**

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## **Teachers:**

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## **Communication:**

### **Beginning Strings Facebook Page**

[www.facebook.com/AMFSBeginningStrings](http://www.facebook.com/AMFSBeginningStrings)

“Like” the AMFS Beginning Strings Facebook Page to stay up to date with Beginning Strings happenings! Teachers will post pictures, reminders, and important information such as concert schedules, announcements, and class updates.

### **Weekly Update Newsletter**

Each week parents and students will be sent a weekly update newsletter with information about what was learned in class that week. Review material, assignments, and practice tips will also be included. This will be a fun and informative way for parents to stay involved with class activities.

### **About the Program and Purpose:**

The Aspen Music Festival and School’s “AfterWorks” offers after-school, in-school and summer programming, in collaboration with other local non-profit organizations as well as Valley schools, to support music education. These programs are designed to complement the quality music instruction students receive from schools and private instructors.

The Beginning Strings Program is open to elementary aged students who wish to study a string instrument through a curriculum that starts with group lessons, master classes, ensemble playing, and performance opportunities. Middle school students are welcome to participate if they were enrolled in the program last year as an elementary student. Our highly experienced teachers will work to help students develop a joy and love for music through string education and performance. This program is a wonderful opportunity for children interested in music to begin playing violin, viola, or cello in a supportive, engaging musical environment. Parents are urged to support and encourage the students in daily practice. Based on the financial commitment and the need for program consistency, it is important for all students to commit to an entire school year of classes. The Beginning Strings program is offered in six schools during the 2014-2015 school year: Aspen Elementary School, Aspen Community School, Aspen Country Day School, Basalt Elementary School, Sopris Elementary School, and Glenwood Springs Elementary School.

## **I. Overview of Program**

The Beginning Strings program includes weekly group classes, private lessons, and one large group concert at the conclusion of each semester (see below for concert dates). Private lessons will be given through the Private Lessons All Year! Program -- each student has the

opportunity to take 5 lessons free of charge with one of many highly experienced string teachers in the area. Please read below for more information about the Private Lessons All Year! Program. Because of the financial commitment and the need for program consistency, it is important for students to commit to participation for the entire school year.

**Renting or Purchasing an Instrument:**

Students have the opportunity to learn violin, viola, or cello. We recommend renting or purchasing an instrument through Shar Music in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Shar Music's rental option, the Shar Way program, is a rent-to-own program, designed to be cost-effective for you while providing your child with a brand new instrument package, including the instrument and bow, hard instrument case, and rosin.

Aspen Music Festival and School has a limited number of instruments available to students on a scholarship basis. Scholarship requests should be made known through the application process. Instruments in the scholarship program are offered to students to use for the school year, remain property of the AMFS, and must be returned to the AMFS in good condition at the end of the 2014-2015 Beginning Strings program. Students/families are responsible for damage and the cost of repairs to the instrument, outside of normal wear and tear.

Option #1: Purchase the instrument outright at the start of the Beginning Strings program

- Most affordable option over the long-run
- Prices negotiated by the AMFS through Shar Music
- Extremely high-quality instruments
- Variety of prices and instrument quality levels available (violins starting at \$150, violas starting at \$199, cellos starting at \$599)

Option #2: Rent the instrument through Shar Music's rent-to-own Program, "SharWay"

- 24 monthly payments, flexible buyout options available
- Return at any time with no further payments
- Earn credit towards over 50 advanced models
- Insurance included
- Monthly rental prices: Violin - \$15.99 Viola - \$21.99 Cello - \$42.99

Option #3: Apply for a partial or full scholarship through AMFS to use an instrument owned by the AMFS

- A very limited number of instruments are available
- Not all scholarship requests can be met in full
- Scholarship instruments are available as a rentals at discounted rental prices or as a full scholarship at no charge

\* Families are certainly welcome to purchase/find an instrument outside of these options. Instrument purchases do NOT have to happen through Shar Music or through the AMFS.

The options above are available to all program participants, but you are welcome to use an alternate mode of obtaining an instrument.

**Materials:**

Each student will need the Beginning Strings Student Starter Pack, which includes one Essential Elements Interactive for Strings book for their instrument, a shoulder pad (for violins and violas) or rock stop (for cellos), music stand, and Don't Fret tape for \$25. These materials should be purchased before the start of classes and can be purchased as a starter pack directly through Shar Music. Any additional music will be handed out in their weekly classes. Students should purchase a 1/2 inch black binder to house their handouts and Essential Elements book.

**Private Lessons All Year! Program (PLAY!):**

Students have the opportunity to sign up for a total of 5 private lessons with a local teacher throughout the school year. These lessons are free of charge, thanks to generous donations to the Beginning Strings program. Students and parents will work with the Beginning Strings Program Coordinator, Karla Dietmeyer, to sign up with a teacher. Once a student has been matched up with a teacher, lesson times and scheduling will be done based on the teacher's and student's availability. First semester is a great time to get these lessons in to support the learning they will be doing in class. Every effort will be made to match the student with their classroom teacher or preferred teacher.

The PLAY! program also has an incentive feature for students who would like to take more than their 5 allotted lessons. Starting in January, teachers will be encouraged to invite individual students to be considered for additional lessons through the PLAY! program. These extra lessons will be housed in the PLAY! Palooza Bank, a visual representation of the amount of extra lessons available. The invitations will be determined by the student's need or desire for more individual attention.

Should a student sign up for less than their 5 allotted lessons, those extra lessons will go into the PLAY! Palooza Bank and will be administered as a part of the 2nd semester PLAY! invitations for additional lessons. Please note: in January the student can decide to reclaim their extra lessons that they opted out of earlier in the year.

Students are always encouraged to sign up for additional lessons with their private teacher outside of the PLAY! program. Please talk with your student's private teacher to discuss their rates and schedule.

Read below for additional information about PLAY! private lessons and lesson policies.

**Beginning Strings All Stars:**

The Beginning Strings All Stars program is an additional opportunity for more advanced Beginning Strings students who wish to participate in an ensemble setting. The All Stars

program will be held once a month starting in November at a mid-valley location. While the All Stars program will focus on supporting the techniques and goals of the Beginning Strings program, it will also introduce other musical skills, such as improvisation, creative thinking, song arrangement, and extended techniques. Repertoire will include popular tunes from multiple genres, including pop, folk, jazz, and rock. Entrance into the All Stars program will be by an audition process or invitation beginning October 20th.

### **Essential Elements Interactive Online:**

The Essential Elements Interactive (EEi) method book that we will be using comes with free online resources in the Essential Elements Interactive Online website. Both parents and students can create accounts and log on to see weekly assignments, watch pedagogical videos, play along with songs in the book, complete theory worksheets, and more. To create your account, students will need the EEi code located in their Essential Elements books as well as their student ID and school code, which the Beginning Strings Program Coordinator, Karla Dietmeyer, will provide. Once your account has been created, you and your student will be able to view assignments, practice exercises from the Essential Elements book, communicate with teachers, and keep track of weekly classes. Look for weekly tips about using the EEi online program in future email newsletters.

### **Parent Volunteer Opportunities:**

Parents interested in volunteering with their child's Beginning Strings class should contact the Beginning Strings Coordinator, Karla Dietmeyer. Volunteer opportunities include helping out with concerts, organizing snacks during class, and K-1st grade student supervision. If you have any interest in joining a Beginning Strings Parent Booster Club, please contact the Beginning Strings Program Coordinator, Karla Dietmeyer.

### **Additional Resources:**

Exposure to music at a young age is a vital part of developing students' education and love of music. The Roaring Fork Valley has a multitude of resources available to your family, including concerts across many genres and a world-class summer music festival, the Aspen Music Festival and School. Consider checking out the Roaring Fork Music Society, which is available to any age string students, and includes a youth orchestra, a youth orchestra prep program, ensemble opportunities, and private lessons. Please visit [www.roaringforkmusicsociety.org](http://www.roaringforkmusicsociety.org) for more information and concert dates.

The Aspen Music Festival and School also hosts the Passes and Lessons Scholarship Program (P.A.L.S), which is geared towards students who wish to focus on vocal and/or instrumental education. The program's goal is to identify and develop musically gifted and motivated musicians in the Roaring Fork Valley and offer them focused lessons and ensemble work during the summer. Visit <http://www.aspenmusicfestival.com/about/community-education/pals/> for more information.

## **Music Resources in the Valley:**

### **Robertson and Sons Violin Shop**

Rentals, Instrument Purchase, accessories

505-889-2999

### **Glenwood Music Shop**

Rentals, accessories

970-928-8628

## **II. Program Expectations**

### **Parent Responsibilities:**

- Attending parent meeting at your child's school on the first day of classes
- Renting the correct instrument and size and purchasing necessary materials
- Supervising and encouraging daily practice
- Signing up your child for private lessons through the PLAY! Program

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Bringing music books, instrument, and a great attitude to class each week
- Practicing every day for 10-30 minutes
- Handling your instrument carefully
- Attending weekly classes and private lessons
- Having a GREAT time learning music!

### **Parent Observation:**

Parents are welcome to observe classes with prior approval from the teacher. Students will have the opportunity to perform for their peers in a casual mini-performance setting during class, and parents are encouraged to support their student's accomplishments by being present at those mini-performances.

## **III. Beginning Strings Policies**

### **Attendance:**

Students are expected to attend and be on time at every class. If students are late to class more than once, teachers will apply the attendance policy as outlined below. Beginning Strings students are unable to keep up with the learning process if they are missing from class, and our teachers are unable to go back and repeat missed material. We will eventually all be performing together, and ensemble performance requires that everyone be equally prepared. Attendance at performances is **mandatory**.

Absence because of illness or emergency should be reported to Karla Dietmeyer at [beginningstrings@aspenmusic.org](mailto:beginningstrings@aspenmusic.org) , preferably before the absence, but definitely within the following 24 hours.

Any other planned absence must be discussed with Karla Dietmeyer and/or the Beginning Strings teacher at the school before the absence occurs. Please allow two weeks advance notice when expected absences will occur.

Absences occurring due to conflicts with official and required school-sponsored activities will automatically be considered excused, as long as they have been presented to the Beginning Strings Coordinator or teachers in advance.

Students are permitted 2 unexcused absences per year. Past 2 unexcused absences, the following attendance policy will apply:

1. 3 unexcused absences: Phone call to parents from Karla Dietmeyer (Beginning Strings Coordinator) or Katie Hone Wiltgen (AMFS Director of Education and Community Programming) to discuss absences and create a plan to improve attendance.
2. 4 unexcused absences: Student is required to attend a Beginning Strings make-up class at another school (location must be approved in advance by Karla Dietmeyer) or take a private lesson as a make-up (private lesson will not be paid for by the Beginning String PLAY Program).
3. 5 unexcused absences: Student will be asked to exit the Beginning Strings program.

### **Behavior Policy:**

The Beginning Strings teachers will use the following system to handle behavior issues that arise during class.

Step 1: If a student repeatedly misbehaves during class, he/she will be spoken to by a teacher after class and will be advised that if there is another problem, we will move on to Step 2.

Step 2: If a student repeatedly misbehaves a second time during class, (not the same class as Step 1, but any class thereafter), he/she will be removed from that class and parents will be called or a meeting will take place.

Step 3: If a student repeatedly misbehaves a third time, after Steps 1 and 2 have been taken, the student's membership in the Beginning Strings program will be reevaluated by the teachers and parents.



## **PLAY! Private Lessons & Policy**

Students have the opportunity to take 5 private lessons free of charge throughout the year. Students will be matched with a private teacher in the first 2 weeks of the Beginning Strings program. Once a student has been matched with a teacher, the student's parents should communicate with their private teacher about scheduling.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled private lessons. Any student who misses a lesson will not be granted an extra lesson through the PLAY! program, though they are welcome to schedule a lesson with their teacher outside of the program. Private teachers reserve the right to charge for any additional lessons scheduled past the allotted 5 in the PLAY! Program.

If a student cannot make a scheduled lesson for any reason other than illness, parents are expected to give the private teacher at least 24 hours notice in order to be granted a rescheduled lesson. If less than 24 hours notice is given, that lesson will be forfeited and cannot be rescheduled.

In the event of an unplanned illness or emergency, parents are expected to contact teachers directly. It will be at the teacher's discretion whether or not the lesson will be rescheduled.

Extra lessons through the PLAY! Program will be administered starting in January on an invitation basis. These extra lessons are based on a student's need or desire for extra help with the class material and are **not** considered substitutes for lessons that were missed earlier in the year.

## **Concerts & Concert Dress**

There will be two concerts for Beginning Strings students. Schools will combine for the Fall Concert based on location, with three concerts happening across the valley. The final Beginning Strings Showcase will be held on Friday, May 8th at 6:30pm in Harris Concert Hall (Aspen).

### **Appropriate concert attire:**

Girls: dress, ankle or floor-length skirts, dress shirt, black pants, dress shoes

Boys: dress pants, button-up shirt, dress shoes, tie optional

### **NOT appropriate concert attire:**

Girls: very short skirts or dresses, t-shirts, jeans

Boys: skate shoes, t-shirts, blue jeans, anything with holes or tears

Questions? Please contact the Beginning Strings Coordinator, Karla Dietmeyer.