

Suzuki String School of Guelph presents

SECE

Suzuki Early Childhood Education

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are questions which parents may have after observing an SECE class. Included are the **Seven Core Principles** of the Suzuki Early Childhood Education program (in **bold**).

FAQs by **Kelly Williamson** Suzuki Flute & SECE Teacher
Photo courtesy of **Don Jones**, Thames Valley Suzuki School



Q. Why are the babies and toddlers all in class together, instead of divided into age groups?

A. This is a strategic part of the SECE program. Young babies are very observant! They are constantly watching and learning from their environment, and from the first class, they are very interested in what the older children are doing. Long before they are able to verbally express what they know, they show that they are consciously following the class by anticipating what is coming next. The young children also learn from having the babies in the class: they learn to be careful and considerate of the little babies, and develop empathy.

Ability Develops Early

Q. Why doesn't each child have their own xylophone in class?

A. One of the aims of the SECE class, in addition to the development of musical skills, is the development of life skills. Being able to have patience, to observe other children quietly as they play, and wait for their own turn to play, is a valuable skill for all children. It is a very important ability for children who will be taking Suzuki lessons, where observation is a key aspect of the music studio.

Children Learn from One Another

Q. Why do babies and toddlers in the SECE program listen to the repertoire CD at home?

A. It takes many, many experiences of hearing a word before children will try to say it themselves. Then when they start trying, it takes many more listening experiences, and many more attempts, to get it right! Parents will notice that frequent listening to the songs and rhymes allows adults, also, to naturally and easily learn even complicated words. When their parents sing the songs and say the rhymes, children will want to join in.

Environment Nurtures Growth

Q. Why do we repeat the same songs over and over?

A. Children love repetition! In addition to needing to hear a song many times to be able to know it and try to sing the words, it is encouraging to have repeat opportunities to try in class. The repetition and predictability of the SECE class allows children to feel safe trying something for the first time, at the moment that they feel ready.

Encouragement is Essential

Q. What does it mean that Suzuki education is mastery based?

A. The Suzuki philosophy of education is based on the observation that all children learn to speak their mother tongue. The environment in which the baby grows is an encouraging, nurturing environment where the child hears the words of their native language repeated over and over. One by one the baby tries words, repeats them, and builds on their repertoire of words. Step by step and block by block, complex language skills are developed; confidence increases as the baby's ability to communicate with those around them grows. Musical skills are taught in this kind of systematic, step-by-step, exploratory and intentional environment.

Success breeds success

Q. Why do parents need to participate in the class?

A. It is very motivating to children to be doing what their parents, and other children in class, are doing. Parents are a support to their child at every moment of the class. In the study of the SECE program at McMaster University's Institute for Music and the Mind (MIMM) which was funded by a generous grant from the Grammy Foundation, it was particularly noted that during the six month period of the study, joint attention was more quickly and more highly developed in infants in the SECE program, compared to infants in a control group. For more information, please see the institute's web site as well as those of the study's co-authors, Dr. David Gerry and Dr. Laurel Trainor (director of MIMM). It's also fun for everyone!

Parent Involvement is Critical

Q. I don't have any musical skills myself. Will I be able to help my child to learn?

A. The SECE environment is positive and nurturing for all participants. Parents who had not developed their musical skills prior to the class, are surprised to find that their singing voice, their ability to match pitch, and keep a steady beat all improve over time, and with repetition. This is not only enjoyable, but essential in Suzuki instrumental lessons, where parents will be actively guiding their young child's home practice.

Every Child Can Learn (and so can every parent!)

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