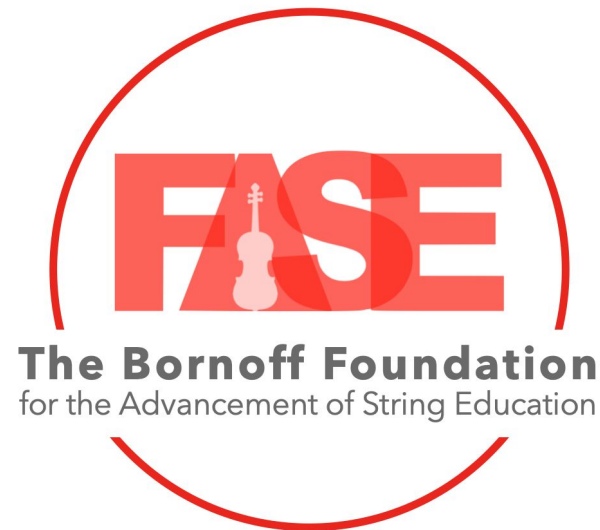


Orchestra Curriculum

FASE has been promoting access and equity in string education since 1978.

It was founded by **George Bornoff**, who pioneered the field of classroom string pedagogy for mixed instruments. He developed a system of technique that scaffolds from the very first sounds to the most advanced string skills so that *all* students could learn and achieve without the need for private lessons.



Orchestra Curriculum

1. What + Why

Characteristics of an effective curriculum. Rationale for mapping.

2. Models

Example formats and resources for curriculum mapping.

3. DIY Strategies

Designing and using a curriculum.



What is a curriculum?

What do we love/hate about curriculum?

Does your district/program have one?

Does it currently help?

Curriculum is...

a framework of values, objectives, sequences, and strategies that support teaching and learning by answering **what, why, when, and how students learn.**

Comprehensive and Clear

Helpful, Reproducible, and Sustainable

Curriculum should *support* by providing clarity and consistency. It ensures that all students have similar core experiences and opportunities.

Inclusive and Responsive

Considers students, community, and society at large. Teachers, too – but not the focus.

Flexible, not fixed! (A living document.)



Curriculum in STRINGS is also...

Cultural

“Musicking” is a set of artistic skills and norms passed on from person to person. String education primarily focuses on European musical traditions, but we can become fluent in multiple practices. (David Elliott: Praxial Music Education)

Skills Focused

The ability to create and express is correlated with technical proficiency.

Concurrent and Continuous

“Units” of learning occur simultaneously and across multiple years, with core topics remaining constant and evolving through levels of difficulty (spiral design).

Curriculum is NOT the repertoire.

A concert-focused curriculum is akin to “teaching to the test.”

- Bulk of state and national music standards exist *outside* of performance.
- A skills-first curriculum avoids plateaus and supports student agency/equity.
- Engaging with culture and context is the only way to meet all standards, plus it provides opportunities for enrichment, connection, and validation.
- A primary goal of music education is to prepare students for *lifelong, independent* musicianship. That requires an entrepreneurial mindset, deep knowledge, and self-efficacy acquired from successful opportunities to apply learning independently.

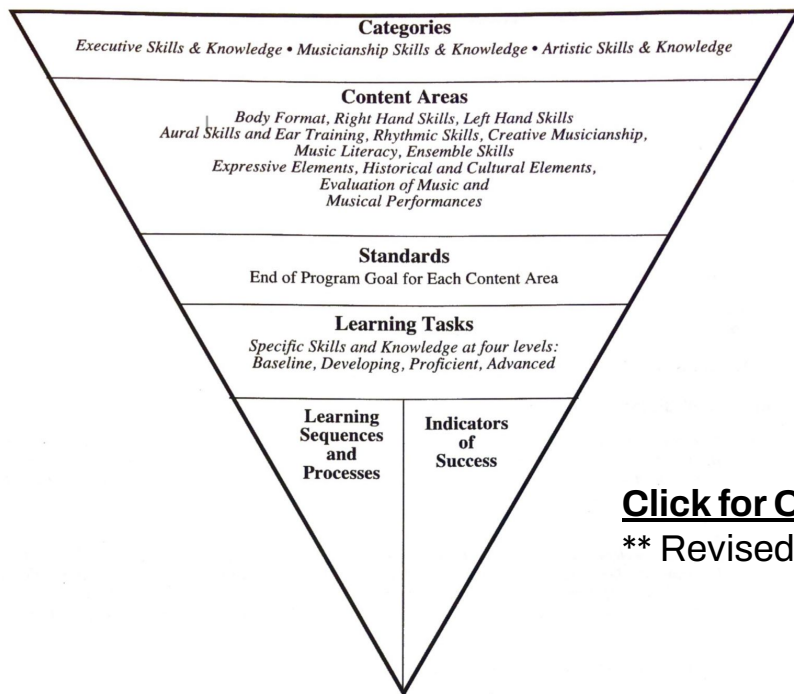
“Did the kid learn about music, or did they just the [Violin 2] part to [Dragonhunter]?”
- Dr. Ann Porter

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Orchestra Curriculum Models

ASTA Curriculum

Figure 1. General Organization of ASTA Curriculum



[Click for Overview](#)

** Revised 2021

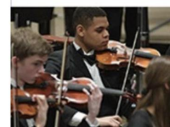
ASTA String Curriculum

Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge in K-12 String Programs and Teaching Studios



 **ASTA**
American String Teachers Association

Stephen J. Benham
Mary L. Wagner
Jane Linn Aten
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Denese Odegaard
Julie Lyonn Lieberman



ASTA Curriculum

1. Standards Category 1: Executive Skills and Knowledge

Content Area 1A—Body Format

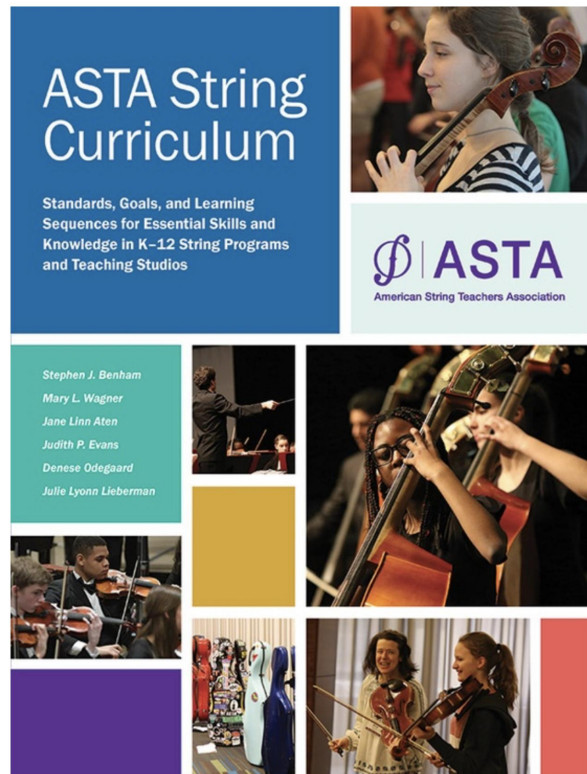
Students perform with a lengthened and balanced posture; support instrument without tension, demonstrate ease of motion; format is adjusted for physiological changes due to growth; control of weight distribution, unilateral movement, bilateral movement, in sitting and standing position.

Content Area 1B—Left Hand Skills and Knowledge

Students perform with the correct placement and angle of the left arm-wrist-hand-fingers to the instrument; demonstrate position that is balanced and free of tension; play with independence of fingers, ease of motion and control of finger weight; produce characteristic tone, with vibrato (as appropriate); show understanding and ability to apply fingerings, finger patterns, shifting, extensions.

Content Area 1C—Right Hand Skills and Knowledge

Students perform with fluent bowing motion, control of variables (weight, angle, speed, and placement), in a variety of bowing techniques and articulations, with characteristic tone.



ASTA Curriculum

Scope and Sequence, Page 1

Category 1: Executive Skills and Knowledge	Baseline	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Content Area 1A—Body Format <i>Students perform with a lengthened and balanced posture; support instrument without tension; demonstrate ease of motion; format is adjusted for physiological changes due to growth; control of weight distribution, unilateral movement, bilateral movement, in sitting and standing position.</i>	1.1—Establish posture (sitting and standing) on all instruments. 1.2—Basic playing position for violin and viola. 1.3—Basic playing position for cello. 1.4—Basic playing position for bass. <i>• Care of instr.</i> <i>• Identify parts</i>	2.1—Unilateral movement (connected to bowing motion) 2.2—Bilateral movement (connected to bowing motion) 2.3—Continue Baseline criteria, monitoring and adjusting to physical characteristics of individual students.	3.1—Continue previous criteria, monitoring and adjusting to physical characteristics of individual students.	4.1—Continue previous criteria, monitoring and adjusting to physical characteristics of individual students.
Content Area 1B—Left Hand Skills and Knowledge <i>Students perform with the correct placement and angle of the left arm-wrist-hand-fingers to the instrument; demonstrate position that is balanced and free of tension; play with independence of fingers, ease of motion and control of finger weight; produce characteristic tone, with vibrato (as appropriate); show understanding and ability to apply fingerings, finger patterns, shifting, extensions.</i>	1.1—Initial left hand finger placement 1.2—Initial finger patterns a. Violin/Viola b. Cello/Bass 1.3—Lateral finger movement 1.4—Vertical technique	2.1—Extensions a. Violin/Viola b. Cello/Bass 2.2—Introduction of positions a. Violin/Viola b. Cello/Bass c. Half Positions 2.3—Refinement of shifting a. Violin/Viola b. Cello c. Bass 2.4—Harmonics 2.5—Finger substitutions 2.6—Simple double-stops (one open string, one fingered string) 2.7—Chromatic alterations (F–F#) 2.8—Extension of vertical technique	3.1—Initial vibrato development 3.2—Advanced positions (5 th and higher) 3.3—Complex double stops (two fingered strings) 3.4—Advanced finger patterns—Violin/Viola (e.g., augmented and chromatic patterns) 3.5—Extension of vertical technique	4.1—Artistic development and applications of vibrato. 4.2—Extension of vertical technique

ASTA String Curriculum

Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge in K–12 String Programs and Teaching Studios



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ASTA Curriculum

Category 1:	Executive Skills and Knowledge	Level:	Baseline
Content Area:	1C. Right Hand Skills and Knowledge		
Benchmark:	<i>Students perform with fluent bowing motion, control of variables (weight, angle, speed, and placement), in a variety of bowing techniques and articulations, with characteristic tone.</i>		
Learning Task:	1.2.a—Perform pizzicato in playing position (violin and viola only)		
Learning Sequences & Processes		Indicators of Success	
<u>Precursors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instrument is placed in correct playing position.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tip of thumb is under the fingerboard.• The pad of the index finger is contacting the string and using a gentle pulling motion.• Open strings being plucked should have a clear, ringing tone.• The right arm should remain relaxed and in good position throughout performance.	
<u>Sequence of Activities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shake right hand out to relieve tension.• Using the right hand, form a gentle fist. Raise the thumb so it points upward.• Bring thumb to the fingerboard on the high-string side and place the tip under the edge of the right side of the fingerboard close to the end.• Using the fatty pad of the index finger gently pull the string to the right.			
<u>Additional Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The shape of the right arm and hand should be curved and relaxed; this assists in preparation of the arm mechanism (muscles and movement) for initial bowing activities.• Pizzicato activities should include both right-hand alone activities and also activities that combine right- and left-hand activities.			





ASTA String Curriculum



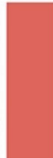
Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge in K–12 String Programs and Teaching Studios

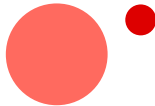




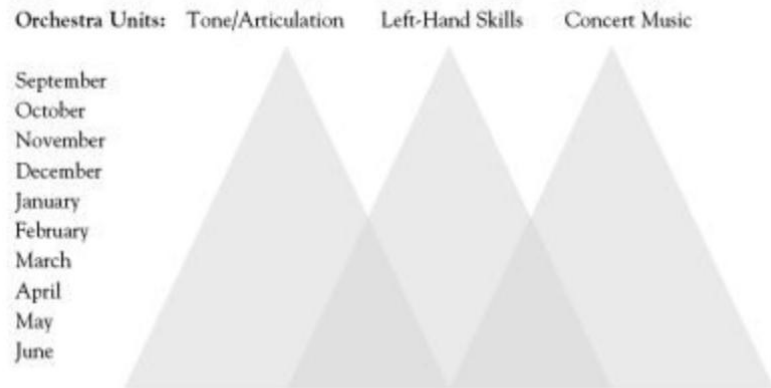
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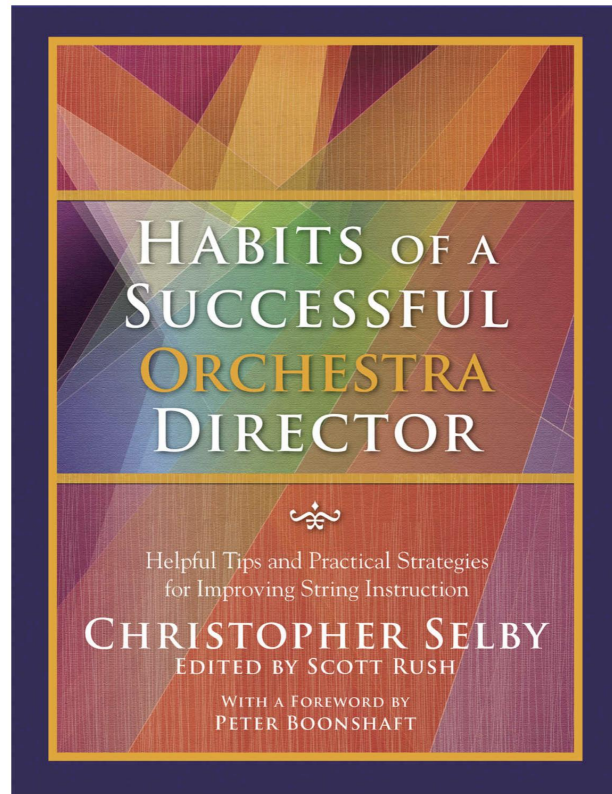






Habits of a Successful Director



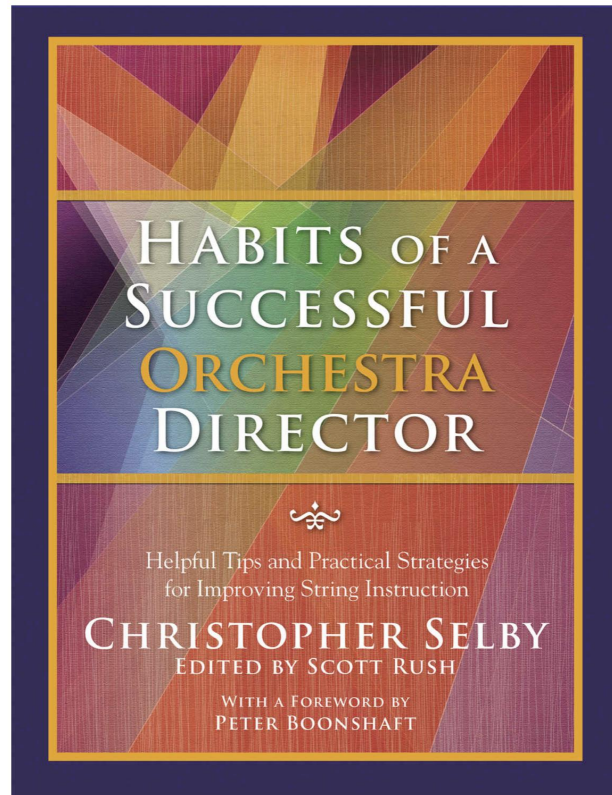
Orchestra units also last longer than a year. Hopefully, they last a lifetime.



Habits of a Successful Director

Selby recommends that learning, like his books, be organized into skill-centered “units”:

1. Instrument position
2. Left-hand skills (including position, vibrato, shifting)
3. Right-hand position (bow hold)
4. Tone and articulation (bowing)
5. Intonation
6. Pulse, rhythms, and rhythmic literacy
7. Tonal literacy and creativity
8. Ensemble skills and concert music



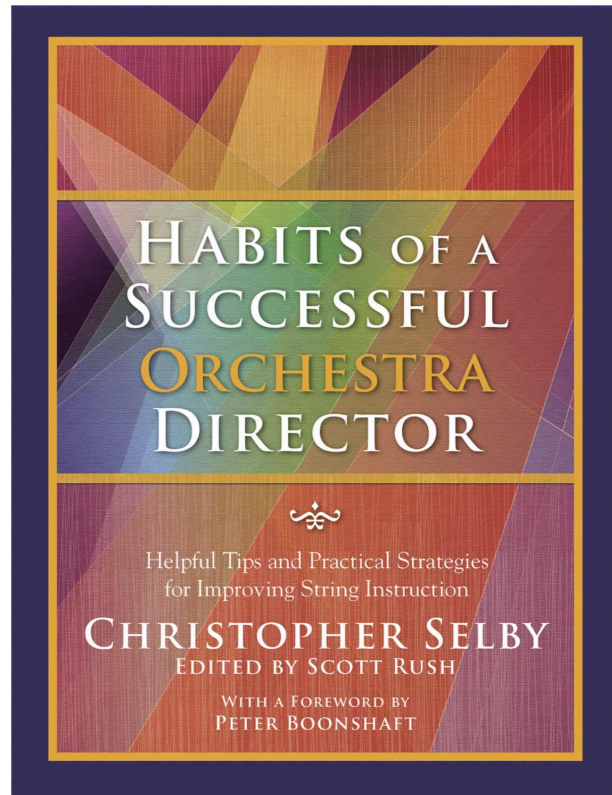
Habits of a Successful Director

Long-range plans (i.e. curriculum) include the following components:

1. Pedagogically sequenced objectives
2. Goals for how much students will learn at each level
3. Assessments
4. Teaching materials - exercises, etudes, music
5. Teaching strategies

Units are leveled according to NAFME framework:

- Novice
- Intermediate
- Proficient
- Accomplished
- Advanced



The Bornoff Approach

Teaching and learning is organized around three primary domains:

Right Hand

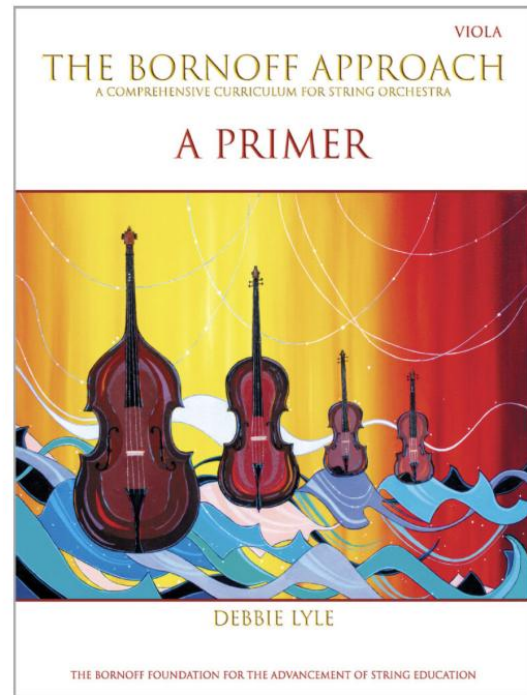
- Tone Development
- Bowing Techniques/Articulations
- Rhythm

Left Hand

- Bornoff Finger Patterns
- Tonal Patterns - in position
- Rhythm - slurring variations

Literacy

- Note reading and rhythmic literacy
- Ensemble skills and repertoire
- Musicianship skills
- Stylistic/cultural fluency



The Bornoff Approach

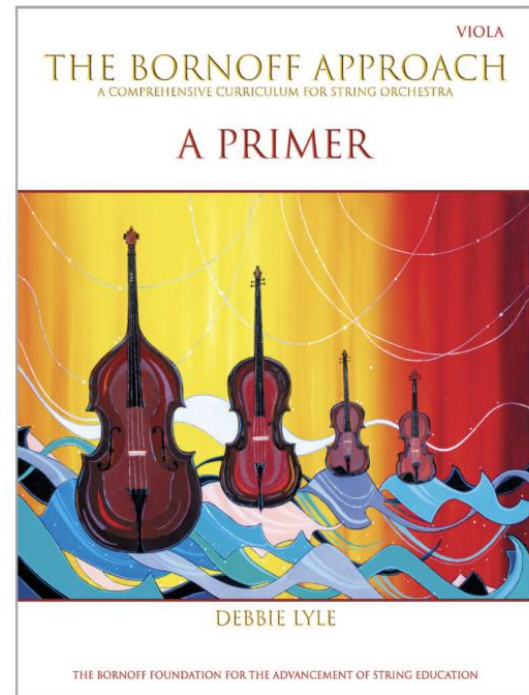
Primer Beginning Level | Finger Patterns 1–3; Pizzicato, Detache, Staccato, Spiccato; Music Literacy for all four strings in 4/4, 3/4, 2/4; Repertoire in Major and Minor; Intro to Jazz Improvisation

Finger Patterns Intermediate Level | Finger Patterns 1–5; Bowing Variations for slurs, duple vs triple meters, string crossings, mixed bow strokes, bow placement; Intro to Scales and Shifting

Patterns in Position Advanced Level | Harmonics; Fingered Double-Stops; Thumb Position; Shifting and Fingering Variations

Bornoff also implements core frameworks to help students organize learning for themselves and to create fluid continuity between levels (scaffolded/spiral design).

[Click here to learn more!](#)



Other Model Resources

Kansas City Schools

- String-specific learning standards
- Comprehensive pacing guide

Forest Hills School District (DRAFT, Morales-Torres)

- Adaptation of ASTA curriculum and KC Schools
- String-specific standards
- Overview templates
- Weekly planning templates

NYSSMA Orchestra Sequence

- Leveled pacing guide
- Includes learning standards outside of performing

Upper Arlington Standards-Based Report (Zunic)



Scan this QR code to access the slides and explore resources.





Mapping YOUR Program

Variables that Influence Curriculum

Starting Age and Grade

Number of classes/lessons/rehearsals per week

Instruction format

Individual vs Group • Homogeneous vs Heterogeneous

Prior learning

Private instruction • General music • Individual experiences

Conditions for personal practice

Availability/quality of instrument • Physical space • Home support

Teacher(s)

Solo vs Team vs Aligned teaching • Teacher training • Personal background



1. Why

Why are you teaching strings/orchestra?

- What do you hope students gain?
- What do you hope students feel?
- What do you hope to pass on to your students?
- What do you hope to change for your students?
- What do you hope to provide for your students?
- What would a student miss if they didn't participate?
- What is the point of it all?

Impactful teaching is guided by a clear, concise philosophy.



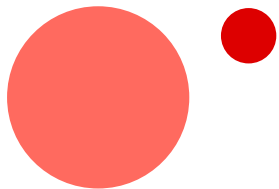
2. Who

Whom are you teaching?

- Age, grades
- Community profile
- School profile
- Student subset

Curriculum should always reflect the needs, interests, and desires of the people. Imposing default or uniform objectives without accommodating the people is a form of colonialism.

Check out: Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire), Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education (Lind/McKoy)



When are you teaching?

- How often?
- Time of day/year?
- Social and historical influences?

Where are you teaching?

- District structure (alignment)
- Physical space
- Local – regional – national – global contexts

#realisticexpectations

3. When & Where



4. What

What should you teach?

What can you teach?

1. Begin at the end – imagine the ideal graduate based on your WHY and WHO. Ask for input!
2. Outline standards achievement benchmarks for each year or level of your program. Start with one domain (or split with a team), then expand/combine.
3. Get specific based on your WHEN. How much can students consistently learn in your specific setup?

4. What

Unit Title: _____

Novice Level

Review Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

New Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

Intermediate Level

Review Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

New Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

Proficient Level

Review Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

New Objectives:

1. _____
2. _____

Unit Planning Model from
Habits for a Successful Orchestra Director
(Selby, p. 177)



5. How

How will you teach and meet your goals?

- Based partly on WHEN and WHERE.
- What are the core learning tasks and experiences for your curriculum?
 - Consistent/equitable student experience from year to year → a systematic *program*
- Is there a need for vertical or horizontal alignment with other teachers?
 - Is there a unifying pedagogy?
 - Need to negotiate core tasks/experiences



5. How

How can the curriculum support new or future teachers?

- If curriculums actually reflect our communities, then they should outlive individual teachers and grow/adapt with new ones!
- Create or link to a bank of strategies/resources that align with your objectives and overarching philosophy
- Establish procedures/schedules for updates. Provide opportunities for input, customization, and access.



5. How

How will we know (prove) students have met the curriculum's aims and objectives?

1. Refer to benchmarks and develop corresponding summative assessments. Doesn't have to be a test!
2. Outline strategies/options for formative assessments that can track individual progress and provide useful feedback to your students.
3. Provide expectations for students (daily!) and engage them in managing their own progress.

Practical Examples: Curriculum Calendar

August	Unit 1: Relationships between Quantities and Reasoning with Equations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
				Weekend							Weekend				D1	Block	Weekend	M		Block		Weekend	M		Block		Weekend						W
		Summer Break														Diagnostic Tests		Learning Segment 1A: Linear & Exponential Expressions															
																Interpret Expressions						Quiz			Test								
September		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
		Wkn	H	Block			Weekend			M	Block			Weekend			M	Block			Weekend			M	Block			Weekend			Brk		
			Learning Segment 1B: Relationships in One Variable													Learning Segment 1C: Relationships in Two Variables																	
																Evaluate Functions in Context																	
			Equations & Ineq: Create, Solve & Explain													Quiz	Create & Graph Lin Eqns					Quiz	Test										
		Reasoning													Connections																		

Practical Examples: Skills Timeline

Hours 1-2 (Classes 1+ part of 2)

Holding the instrument and introduction to the parts of the instrument

OPEN STRING CYCLE –

Pizzicato - 4x per string, refining posture, letter names of strings

Variations – 3, 2, 1x per string – use of large group small group

Focus is on on playing together, posture, letter names

Détaché – Full bows 4x per string, maybe introduce lower and upper half

Focus is on bow hold, placement and straight draw

Hours 2-4 (Classes 2-5)

Development/Refinement of above,

OPEN STRING CYCLE –

Détaché –

Single Strings – add Lower and Upper Half, full bows- vary number of bows – 3, 2x per string

Introduce “combo bows” #1 rhythm – this will become a great first exercise of each class!

Double Strings - Full bows 4x per string –

Introduce Spiccato – 16 bounces per string

Introduce Staccato – 2, 3, 4 stops per bow

FINGER PATTERNS, Introduce by rote and boxed diagram

2-Note Prep Finger Patterns – pizzicato and full bows

3-Note Prep Finger Patterns – pizzicato and full bows

IMPROVISATION –

Introductory lessons (D or other open string, and combinations of open strings)

Perhaps add fingers 1 and 2 (minor pattern)

REPERTOIRE –

Hot Cross Buns/Burnt Cross Buns Introduction

Hours 10-11 for us is concert prep for December show

Development/Refinement of all above

Focus is on memorization and performance of tunes

First performance includes:

Open String Cycle with Whole Bow Détaché

Hot Cross Buns/Burnt Cross Buns

Au Clair de la Lune (all strings, highlighting one instrument on first pass through each string)

Something else – sometimes Merrily We Roll Along, sometimes “Allegro” or other first tune from Suzuki played in D – sometimes select solos for individual classes or subsets of students
“Groovin’ for the First Time” with soloists

AFTER THE FIRST CONCERT - January

Hours 13-14

Development/Refinement of all above technique, but focus turns to note reading, rhythmic reading

OPEN STRING CYCLE –

Lots of double strings, and “combo bow” variations as they pertain to written rhythms

FINGER PATTERNS –

Solidification of 4-Note Preparatory Patterns with bowing variations and note reading

Introduction of letter name theory and pattern construction

REPERTOIRE –

Other Primer repertoire

Brother John is Blue

Options – *French Folk Song* and others (in D) (Suzuki)

Practical Examples: Individual Lesson Plans

Beginner Sample Lesson Plan #1- if seeing students 1x per week (5th grade) 45 minutes

Right Hand	Left Hand	Literacy	Other
<p>OSC Pizz 4x each Goals - counting out loud, playing relatively together *depending on age, perhaps intro letter names of strings</p> <p>Introduction of the bow hold, play 4 x each on at least a few strings (the goal is the OSC, perhaps just the first half) Begin at the frog and at the tip - provide manual assistance</p>	<p>Demonstrate show left hand fingers work</p> <p>Pizzicato - Intro 1st finger at the whole step from the nut, play 2x each on every string *use 4x each on each pitch if the class is very large, or if several students have fine motor skill issues</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Open String Cycle String Cycle form Finger Numbers Pizzicato Détaché</p>	<p>Focus on basic posture while going through the exercises</p> <p>Ensemble goal - eyes and attention on me, the director/teacher</p> <p>Bringing attention to the names and different sounds of the instruments through the “large Group-Small Group” process</p>

[Click here](#) for a full first-year timeline of Debbie Lyle’s Bornoff curriculum!
[Click here for Year 2.](#)

Another example:
[EE Teacher Resources Kit](#)
(different than teacher score)

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Connect with Us!

Our Team

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String Teachers *from* and *for* Every Community