



## Student Handbook 2009-2010

Welcome to North Valley Music School. It is our goal that you and your child have the best in music education. To that end we have designed this handbook to guide your private lesson experience at NVMS. It is based upon 11 years of history at NVMS and the vast experience of our teachers. Please read it carefully, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask your teacher or Janet or Cameron in the office.

Thank you for choosing North Valley Music School!

### **Introduction**

Particularly in the early years, the study of music is a three-legged stool with the parent/caregiver, student and teacher equally important. Music study is most successful when all three legs of the stool are actively engaged. Music teachers tell us that even at age 8 to 11 (and most definitely less than 8) a parent/caregiver must be involved daily in the child's music study. It is the rare 8 year-old that will sit down and practice music by themselves. This generally means the caregiver regularly attends (or checks in with the teacher at the end of) each lesson to understand practice assignments and progress, and checks the assignment notebook each week. It also means that the caregiver must be available to assist with practice. A musical background or music knowledge is **not** a prerequisite. You can simply sit down with the child during practice, encourage the child and help them through their practice routine.

#### ***NVMS Recommends:***

Age 8 and under – parent/caregiver attends every lesson and assists student daily with practice.

Ages 9-12 – parent/caregiver attends at least one lesson each month and attends the last 10 minutes of each lesson to understand practice assignments and assists student with practice as needed.

12-18 – determined by teacher, parent and student. Some students may take lessons completely of their own initiative. Others may have a parent still involved through high school.

#### ***First Lesson***

We strongly recommend that a parent/caregiver who will help the student practice and attend lessons, attend the first lesson and meet with the teacher. At this first lesson caregiver, teacher and student (if appropriate) will discuss their respective expectations. Does the caregiver expect written notes from the teacher, or does the teacher expect the caregiver will sit in and take notes? How often and for how long should the child practice, and what should be accomplished? What progress is expected? How is it measured? For this to be achieved open communication among the three legs of the stool is critical. If it is a question that is not appropriate to be asked during the lesson either party can call or make an appointment to talk outside the lesson time. We encourage the caregiver to regularly check in with the teacher – a conference can be scheduled during lesson time or (usually) outside lesson time.

## Parent/Caregiver Expectations

***Lessons- Please don't send a sick child to lessons; our teachers need to stay well!***

1. Be on time. Your teacher most likely has another lesson starting right after your child's and can't go over to make up missed time. **It is fine to walk into the studio at your designated time even if the teacher is still teaching.**
2. Be involved. Take notes, record the lesson, ask questions and familiarize yourself with the music books and/or commonly used terms. And, especially for Suzuki students, listen to the recording daily; it is as important as the actual practice time. Traditional students should listen to a variety of music related to the child's practice – your teacher can give you recommendations.
3. Be present. Eliminate all distractions - this is as important to the student's ability to focus as it is to yours.
4. Be enthusiastic. Focus on the growth you see and let the teacher give constructive criticism – teachers can tell how much practicing has been done (no need to tattle). It is good to let the students discover that their work (or lack thereof) is evident to the teacher.
5. Be supportive. Do everything in your power to help your child arrive rested, focused, fed and ready to work.

## ***Practice***

1. Be involved. Help read the assignment in their notebook (notes from the teacher or important dates like recitals may be there) and structure practice time. Set practice expectations together with teacher. Focus and listen to the practice. This can be your special time together.
2. Be consistent. When a child knows that practice is part of the daily routine they are better prepared to work. (The more regular the routine the less resistance the child will show towards practicing.)
3. Be generous. Compliment even if only one small thing has improved. A little praise can go a long way to motivate. A "gold star" or applause from parent or important person in their life is monumental to any student and may inspire a deeper desire to learn.
4. Be positive. "I really liked the way the first part of that piece sounded, have you thought about trying to get louder with the second part" works better than "that doesn't sound right".
5. Be creative. Some days you hide vegetables in a yummy cheese sauce or make a game out of chores. Try the same with music. (See our practice board upstairs for tips).

### ***Performance***

1. Be Aware. Some kids are great at expressing their feelings when it comes time to perform. Other kids aren't as aware of their feelings and may need help dealing with their emotions. Others are completely unaffected by performance issues. Children can change as they grow or undergo a change in their lives – so the 8 year old who would perform anywhere, anytime when they were younger may suddenly develop performance anxiety.
2. Be protective. Performance requires a lot of focus. Students should be fed a light meal of protein and complex carbohydrates and have plenty of time to digest their food. Students should be rested - giving a performance after rushing from another activity is a recipe for disaster.
3. Be prepared. The simple act of putting on special clothes and fixing our hair tells our mind that we are preparing for something special. Athletes put on their uniform, surgeons their scrubs, actors their costume, etc. The dressing ritual helps prepare the mind for performance. Remind children to bring their music if needed.
4. Be early. Rushing in the minute before the recital starts will leave your child harried and unfocused. Even if you are meeting the child there – they will likely not focus until you arrive.

### **Student Expectations**

#### ***Lesson***

1. Be on time. Your teacher most likely has another lesson starting right after yours and can't go over to make up missed time. It is fine to walk into the studio at your designated time even if the teacher is still teaching.
2. Be ready to work. Arrive ready to work: with your books and materials - even if you haven't reached your practice goals, you and your teacher can still move forward together.
3. Be ready to learn. There is always something new and exciting to be learned.
4. Ask questions. If you don't understand what you are learning, the words your teacher is using, or what is expected of you, ask your teacher. (They really don't bite!)

#### ***Practice***

1. Be ready. Have a routine, stretch, take a deep breath and remember why you are practicing. Look over your assignment notebook first and decide what you need to practice for the day. A typical practice includes warm-up, sight-reading, technique, theory, review piece(s), polish piece(s), new piece(s), and may include a listening assignment. Get in the habit of setting an achievable goal for the day and write it down. This will help you feel like you've really done something to be proud of.
2. Be gentle. If you become frustrated, stop, stretch, take a quick break and move on to something else if necessary. Come back to the piece at the end of your practice and write down any questions in your notebook to ask your teacher.

3. Be diligent. Pay attention to your notebook and music. Do you know the notes, rhythms and main ideas? Can you hear how it is supposed to go in your head? Have you tried to sing (hum) it? Have you listened to it? (If it was assigned or if you are a Suzuki student.)

### ***Performance***

1. Be communicative. Tell your parents/family/friends about your recital dates.
2. Be ready. Bring your music. Brush your hair. Put on performance clothes. (Just like a uniform for a sports game.) Take time to settle your mind and focus. Use your excitement to get your muscles ready for action and sharpen your mind.
3. Be gracious. This is a good time to thank those who have helped you get to this point – your teacher, your parents, etc. And give yourself a pat on the back – you have done the hard work!
4. Enjoy. And have fun.

### **Finally**

We try to match students and teachers as best as possible with respect to goals, personalities and learning styles. Occasionally, the student/teacher pairing doesn't work as we expect. Should you or your child feel that lessons are not going well; the first step is to speak with the teacher. This can be done during any lesson or scheduled at the teacher's convenience. Communication between you and the teacher is **essential**; you spend time daily with your child and the teacher sees them once a week. If, after speaking with the teacher, you still feel that a change might be necessary the next step is to communicate with the office. One of the most positive aspects of the music school is that we usually have more than one teacher per instrument and have the ability to move students between studios. It is important to remember that like most things in life, "one size does not fit all". Teachers not only understand but encourage a change if it will make learning better for the student.

**Performance Opportunities:** *Check our website for dates and times. If you would like to play as part of a chamber group or perform in the community – please let your teacher know.*

Morning String Group - Wednesdays

Whitefish Community Orchestra-Mondays

Fiddle Group-Fridays

Suzuki Groups- Fridays

Guitar Circle – new – call for times

Studio Recitals- as scheduled by teacher

Christmas Stroll-December 11, 2009

Violin Workshop Weekend -April 10, 2010

Marabeth L. Schmit Merit in Piano Scholarship Competition-Late Spring 2010