

# THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS STRING PROJECT

Welcome to the University of Texas String Project Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program! We are thrilled to have the opportunity to make music with you and your child. Below you will find information regarding both our Early Childhood Experiences program for children ages 0-3 and our Stepping Stones program for children ages 3-4.

ECE classes meet on all Saturdays corresponding to the UT and general String Project calendar. If there are any unexpected changes to the schedule, you will receive a notice via e-mail as far in advance as possible. ECE families are included in all of our special events (Convocation, Alternative Styles Festival, Recitals, Winter Concert and Spring Concert.) Please plan to be ready when class begins and stay for the full 50 minutes. If your child will be absent, please e-mail the String Project office ([string\\_project@mail.music.utexas.edu](mailto:string_project@mail.music.utexas.edu)). We ask that you leave strollers in the hallway outside the classroom to conserve space. Please do not bring food or toys into the class.

*Parking* – Most Saturdays, parking on the UT campus is available if you have a UT permit (information on permits to come). Be careful to check signage closely, because there are many handicapped or otherwise reserved spots peppered in among those spots that are available at night and on weekends. Additionally, metered city slots are available on Dean Keaton, which is only a block away. There are certain Saturdays (football games or other special events) on which access to campus is limited. On such days, we recommend that you arrive early, because you will almost certainly need to park on Dean Keaton or other off-campus spots and walk in.

*Sibling/Visitors Policy* - To maintain a familiar environment and balanced class size, only registered students and their parents may participate in String Project ECE classes. Siblings who are old enough to sit by themselves doing a quiet activity will be permitted to sit in the chairs along the edge of the classroom, but we ask that you help us keep distractions to a minimum. Adult visitors (relatives, etc.) are welcome to observe or participate at any time.

## **Early Childhood Experiences**

Early Childhood Experiences meets either from 9:00-9:50 **or** 11:00-11:50. Classes are held in MRH 4.130, unless otherwise noted.

### **ECE Curriculum**

Our early childhood program is designed to lay a foundation for musical development while building social-emotional, cognitive and motor skills. Through this process, both the child and caregiver prepare for later instrumental instruction. The repetition of the curriculum from week to week allows your child to attain success on many levels over time, while providing a predictable environment to foster participation in our youngest students. We transition with minimal interruption from one activity to the next, varying the energy, instruments, and goals. Parent involvement is critical, and we invite you to engage fully in this special time with your child by modeling enthusiastic participation. In some activities, every child will receive a turn (to

play, sing, etc.); in other cases, only two or three children will participate. We purposefully create these opportunities for all children to develop patience and understanding.

*The Parents/Caregiver's Role* –Suzuki philosophy emphasizes the importance of the parent as the child's first and most influential teacher. The ECE class provides a beautiful opportunity for you to observe and learn from your child as s/he learns. Please observe your child and provide encouragement; but do not feel you need to verbally instruct him/her to participate in a certain way. If you feel your child is disruptive in some way (it's okay!), please feel free to take a break outside the classroom and then rejoin the activities once your child has had a moment to calm down.

*Materials* – You will receive a recording and lyrics booklet of our class songs and rhymes to listen to at home. Listening, singing, clapping, dancing, and moving to the music at home and promotes your child's musical development and involvement in class. Your child will have opportunities to play a variety of percussion instruments in class – you are not expected to purchase instruments. They are a great special treat at music time! Also, each family receives a journal to make observations about your child's growth and learning. The journals will be kept in the classroom so that your teachers have an opportunity to contribute, too.

## **Stepping Stones**

Stepping Stones meets from 9:00-9:50, in MRH 4.2140, unless otherwise noted.

### **Stepping Stones Curriculum**

This course is designed to build upon experiences from the Early Childhood Experiences class, and to prepare young musicians for future instrumental or musical study. Young children learn best through action, and repetition and expansion of the curriculum from week to week builds confidence, familiarity, and eventual mastery of the material. To this end, class experiences will include age-appropriate singing, movement, listening, discussion, instrument playing, and dramatic play. Musical transitions and opportunities for creative expression facilitate the young child's natural inclination to express their musicality through movement, spontaneous singing, and activity.

Many children will not choose to participate in every activity, particularly at the beginning of the year. This is ok! and even expected, while the children observe their peers, get to know each other, and get to know the teacher. It is more effective for the children's learning if they choose to participate in their own time.

*The Parents/Caregiver's Role* - Parent participation in *Stepping Stones* is **optional**. This class is an opportunity for your child to develop peer relationships that will be crucial to future ensemble study, and to build their independence in a safe and supportive environment. Many children are able to focus better in a class without grown-ups, but some will need support in order to feel comfortable in the beginning weeks. If you do feel that you should stay, please feel free to sing, move, or participate, or to just watch; it is up to you! We are also happy to guide if you are unsure.

*Materials* – There are no required materials for Stepping Stones class. Occasionally I may distribute a practice recording for you all to use at home, particularly if we are preparing for a String Project concert performance. You can further support the children's work at home by listening, dancing, singing, and discussion!

### **Transitioning into the String Project Cadet Program**

The UT String project begins instrumental study at age four. If your child will be four at the start (or beginning) of the following Fall semester, please fill out a lottery form prior to the month of May. Filling out the lottery form is the only way to put your child in the application pool for instrumental study. The Early Childhood Experiences and Stepping Stones programs are "free standing" music enrichment programs, and children's participation in either program does NOT guarantee admission to the Cadet and/or School Aged String Project Program.

We are excited to offer these dynamic Early Childhood offerings that will help to prepare your child for future instrumental or musical study, either here, in private studio, or in one of the many Suzuki programs that the Austin community has to offer.

*Again, welcome to the University of Texas String Project Community. We look forward to getting to know you and your child!*

*Laurie Scott, UT String Project Director  
and  
The UT String Project ECE faculty*