

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# STUDIO POLICIES & HANDBOOK

2023-2024



**Sharon Neufeld**

*Director and Instructor of Violin & Viola*

[www.TheSuzukiAcademy.com](http://www.TheSuzukiAcademy.com)

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**\*\* PLEASE NOTE \*\***

*Enrollment in The Suzuki Academy indicates your acceptance of all Information,  
Guidelines and Policies contained in this Handbook.*

*Please sign here AFTER you have read and initialed in all required sections in this Handbook.*

*Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_*

# MEET MS. SHARON



**SHARON NEUFELD** has been a music educator since 1992, and has been playing the violin and viola for nearly four and a half decades. She is a trained violin & viola instructor registered with the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA), with a private studio located in Richmond, TX.

In addition to her private studio, during the 2022-23 school year, Ms. Sharon served as the Orchestra Director at Lamar CISD's "Gold Track" secondary schools in Richmond: Foster High School, Briscoe Junior High School, and Wertheimer Middle School. Prior to moving back home to the Houston area, she operated private studios in Sioux Falls, SD; Luverne, MN; and Rochester, MN; and was also the Instrumental Ensembles Director at Schaeffer Academy in Rochester, MN. Between 2013-2017, Ms. Sharon was the Executive Artistic Director of the Indianapolis Suzuki Academy (ISA), where she also served as ISA's Director & Instructor of Violin and Viola Programs and directed special programs such as Chamber Music, Performance Groups, and the Master Class Series. Before moving to Indianapolis, she was the Founder & Owner of The Suzuki Academy of Southwest Colorado and Kindermusik at The Suzuki Academy of Southwest Colorado, both in Durango, CO. During her tenure in Durango, she also served as the Director of the Preparatory Strings Orchestra of the Four Corners Youth Symphony Association, and the Academic Director of the Durango Chamber Music Academy.

A lifelong musician who began violin lessons at the age of 7, Ms. Sharon added the viola to her musical life at the age of 12. She holds a Master of Music in Viola Performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music in Houston, TX; a Bachelor of Music in Viola Performance from Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, OH; and graduated from The High School for Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) in Houston, TX. She has extensive training through the SAA, is in the process of attaining her SAA Certificate of Achievement, and is working towards certification to become an SAA Teacher Trainer for Violin and Viola.

Ms. Sharon has enjoyed extensive ensemble performing experience in different contexts and locations around the country and the world, beginning with the HSPVA Symphony & Chamber Orchestra, the "HSPVA Gig Quartet", and top positions in the Houston Region IX Orchestras and the nationally-recognized Texas All-State Orchestras during all four of her high school years. Her post-college ensemble work has included orchestras and chamber music groups in Colorado, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and overseas in Southern Russia.

Ms. Sharon loves to garden, cook, and tackle household DIY projects. She is studying to become an integrative health & wellness coach, and is also a certified dog trainer and experienced breeder of gorgeous European Cream Golden Retrievers and Great Pyrenees.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

- The Suzuki Academy is a year-round program which offers Private Lessons and Group Classes in Violin, Viola and Cello, to students from ages 3 to adults. The Academy will soon be adding Suzuki Early Childhood classes for babies/toddlers and their parents/caregivers.
  - GENERAL LESSON LENGTH REQUIREMENTS:
    - 30-minute lessons – Young beginners (ages 3-8), Pre-Twinkle through Early Book 2
    - 45-minute lessons – Older beginners (ages 8-13), Books 1-3
    - 60-minute lessons – Intermediate & advanced students, ages 13+, Books 4+
    - 75-minute & 90-minute lessons – Advanced students, ages 13+, Books 6+
  - Mark your calendar right away in order to include all of our events, as well as the dates when there are no lessons or classes. **Mark performance dates in BIG RED LETTERS.**
  - Studying a stringed instrument is a serious commitment. This requires time and effort for both the Student and the Parent. Please make every effort to limit your child's extracurricular activities to no more than two while enrolled in The Suzuki Academy.
  - WORK HARD! Your teacher's assignments are not mere suggestions; they need to be carried out fully in order for your teacher to help you reach your full potential.
  - Help your child check to make sure they are bringing ALL of their materials to each lesson.
  - Do not rent or purchase a new instrument without first getting your teacher's consent. Your teacher will guide you through this process, and assist you in acquiring the most appropriate instrument for your child.
  - We work very hard to make our Academy environment an inviting and comfortable place to learn. Please help your children to remember to wash hands, remove shoes, pick up after themselves, turn off lights & faucets, flush toilets, etc.
  - Siblings are welcome in Private Lessons and Group/Ensemble Classes, provided that they have a constructive, quiet activity to keep them occupied. Young siblings should remain with the parent in the lesson studio, unless otherwise directed by Ms. Sharon. Older siblings may wait in the living room or dining room. Children are not allowed to wander the home freely.
  - Whenever you need to reach Ms. Sharon, please use the following preferred methods of communication: email ([TheSuzukiAcademy@gmail.com](mailto:TheSuzukiAcademy@gmail.com)), text (346-388-9034), and via the Academy's website ([www.TheSuzukiAcademy.com](http://www.TheSuzukiAcademy.com)). Please allow up to 48 hours for a response, unless you have marked your communication "urgent."
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# ACADEMY POLICIES

## PRIVATE LESSON ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to **arrive 10-15 minutes early** for their Private Lessons and Group Classes, in order to wash hands, use the bathroom, and prepare their instrument and materials. The teacher will wait 15 minutes for a student to arrive before declaring them a no-show. If a student arrives within 15 minutes, the teacher will complete the lesson but is not required to make up time lost due to student tardiness. If a teacher is late for the lesson, any missed lesson time will be made up. \_\_\_\_\_

Enrollment in The Suzuki Academy is not a “payment per service” arrangement, but rather a tuition-based academy. Enrolling in music lessons is a purchase of a teacher’s services and a reservation of the teacher’s time. Tuition entitles a student to The Suzuki Academy membership and scheduled weekly lessons & classes. The student’s lesson time is reserved for him/her, and since the time passes whether a student uses it or not, a lesson missed is time and money lost. The full fee is to be paid whether or not the student attends all lessons. (Please read the next paragraph for information on makeup lessons.) Notification of inability to attend a lesson is greatly appreciated, but does not excuse payment for contracted lessons. If you need to cancel a lesson, please contact your teacher directly at least 24 hours in advance, except in cases of sudden illness or accident. Any lesson missed by the teacher will be made up at a mutually convenient time. Lesson cancellation does not exempt the student from payment of tuition. ***There are no refunds or credits given for individual missed lessons or group classes.*** \_\_\_\_\_

***MAKEUP LESSONS: There are two makeup weeks built into the Academic Year Calendar – one in December and one in May. All makeup lessons will be held during these weeks. If a student does not need a makeup lesson at the time of a scheduled makeup week, they may opt to either have that week off from lessons (but not from practice! 😊), or they may take a lesson during that week as a “credit in the bank” in the event that they need a makeup lesson in the future.*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Please click on the following for an economist’s view on makeup lessons:***  
***<http://ottawasuzukistrings.ca/makeupleasons>.*** \_\_\_\_\_

**TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF ACADEMY BREAKS:** It is understandable that some families (particularly those with pre-school or homeschooled children) prefer to travel at times other than the scheduled breaks indicated on the Academy’s Academic Calendar. However, please note that except in extreme cases (i.e. death in the family), there will be no refunds or credits if a student must miss a lesson due to travel outside of Academy breaks. \_\_\_\_\_

**SUMMER LESSONS:** In order to retain your/your child’s place in The Suzuki Academy for the following academic year, they must take the equivalent of 7 lessons during the summer. These lessons may be scheduled as 7 individual lessons, or they may be scheduled as fewer lessons of a longer duration (i.e. five 42-minute lessons in place of seven 30-minute lessons). Students may also schedule up to two lessons per week during the summer. \_\_\_\_\_

## GROUP/ENSEMBLE CLASS ATTENDANCE

Group/Ensemble Classes **ARE A LESSON**, and are a vital part of the student's development in the Suzuki Method. They are required for all Academy students **and their parents**. There are few good excuses for missing group. Please commit to the entire class time, and do not schedule other activities at that time.

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***Low attendance – more than 2 missed classes in the fall, and more than 3 missed classes in the spring – may prevent participation in Group Performances, and may also constitute grounds for dismissal from the Academy***

PreTwinkle and Book 1-3 students under 18 years old must always have a parent at Group Class. Parents of students in Books 4 and up should be present to observe as often as they are able. Please see below regarding the use of cell phones and other devices during lessons and classes. \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT & ATTENDANCE

The most progress is made when students and parents practice regularly. Parents of younger students are taught how to practice with their child and assist students in setting aside practice time. Listening to recordings, attending concerts, and participating in Academy sponsored programs and recitals are necessary to learn. All enrolled Academy students are required to perform in both Group Performances and at least one Solo Recital per year. \_\_\_\_\_

***Unless otherwise arranged with the Teacher, students 13 and under must have a parent present in the studio at all Private Lessons in order to take notes and effectively help the student with home practice.*** \_\_\_\_\_

Continual communication is a natural part of any educational endeavor. Open and healthy communication is strongly encouraged and appreciated between the Student, Parent, and Teacher. Any conflicts or problems that may arise in the course of the year should immediately be brought to the Teacher's attention. Parent conferences may be held at any time necessary during the student's lesson, with or without the student present. This time helps to give both the Parent and Teacher a chance to discuss how things are going, or to address any issues that might arise. Your child's development – both musical and otherwise – is very important. These conferences help to make sure that the work we do each week and the daily work you do at home in regards to your child's instrument study are helping to foster a healthy, happy and musical child. \_\_\_\_\_

## CELL PHONES & OTHER DEVICES

The use of cell phones or other devices is strictly limited to lesson-related activity (i.e. taking a picture or video of something the teacher wants you to remember), and must not be used for any other reason. ***Parents who are constantly on their phones or devices (texting, emailing, etc) during lessons will be seen as not committed, and the family may be asked to look elsewhere for their child's music education.*** Exceptions will be made for parents who have an older child at home who needs to be able to reach the parent in case of emergency. \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE: In order to help students prepare most effectively for their lessons, children aged 17 and younger are not allowed to use devices of any kind while in the building for Academy private lessons or group classes. \_\_\_\_\_**

## LISTENING TO RECORDINGS

***Listening to the CD is vital to your/your child's progress!***

There is no Mother Tongue Approach without listening. Failure to listen to the CD on a regular basis could result in your family being asked to look elsewhere for your child's music education. It is very discouraging to the Teacher, as we cannot make up for the learning that you miss when you fail to have your child listen to their Suzuki recordings. \_\_\_\_\_

***A student who doesn't listen to their Suzuki recordings tends to progress about 4 TIMES SLOWER than one who does! \_\_\_\_\_***

If you think lessons are expensive, think about how much more they cost if your child is moving unnecessarily slowly because they do not listen! An extra CD costs \$15-20, and an extra lesson costs over \$70/hour. Put your music on an iPod or other device and use it DAILY! \_\_\_\_\_

## RECITALS

Please see the "Solo Recital Information Guide" included at the end of this Parent Guidebook. \_\_\_\_\_

## ILLNESS POLICY

In order to protect faculty and other students from contagious diseases, we request that students, parents and siblings with a contagious illness to refrain from participating in Academy lessons, classes, and events until they are well. If a student is too ill for school, he/she is too ill for his/her music lesson. We work in close proximity and with our hands, so germs spread easily. Please consider the health and well-being of all in the Academy. \_\_\_\_\_

***The Teacher reserves the right to not teach lessons to students who are ill, or appear to be suffering symptoms of the flu, colds, etc.*** The same applies to parents or siblings accompanying the student. In the case of illness, please make every attempt to notify your Teacher at least 24 hours in advance. In the event of illness, please attempt to switch lesson times with another student. There are no refunds or credits given in the event of illness. \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** The Academy considers "illness" to include fever or diarrhea/vomiting within the previous 24 hours, and/or excessive/productive coughing/sneezing/sniffing at the time of the lesson. Additionally, if the student has had chicken pox or a similar breakout, sores must be completely crusted over for at least 24 hours. In the case of lice, the student must be completely free of both lice and nits for at least 24 hours. ***Please note that all of the above guidelines also apply to parents and siblings attending lessons.*** \_\_\_\_\_

***SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING COVID PRECAUTIONS: All students, parents, and siblings must wash hands before attending Private Lessons and Group Classes in person. Additionally, if anyone in the student's household has Covid, has been in contact with someone who has Covid, or is showing any symptoms that in any way resemble Covid, please request a Zoom lesson for that week, or take the week off in order to rest & recover fully. \_\_\_\_\_***

## SEVERE WEATHER

The Teacher will determine cancellation of Private Lessons or Group Classes due to severe weather, and will notify families via email and/or text. In general, these decisions will follow suit with the local public schools (LCISD, FBISD, KISD), and will be made with the safety of Academy families in mind. If Academy activities are cancelled due to severe weather, a possible "Weather Day" may be scheduled by the Teacher. There are no refunds or credits given in the event of severe weather. \_\_\_\_\_

## INSTRUMENT RENTAL & MAINTENANCE

It is important to keep your instrument and equipment in good playing condition. At least once a year, string students should consider re-hairing their bow and changing strings. Those who practice every day will need to do these more often. Every student should have an extra set of fresh strings ***in their instrument case*** at all times! \_\_\_\_\_

Our preferred instrument shops are:

### **Katy Violin Shop**

5131 South Fry Road, Suite 500, Katy, TX 77450

281-755-4169

<https://www.katyviolinshop.com/>

### **Lisle Violin Shop**

1575 West Grand Parkway South, Katy, TX 77494

281-396-4848

<https://www.violins.com/>

## WITHDRAWAL or DISMISSAL from ACADEMY

***Out of consideration for the Academy, and specifically your Teacher, any family or individual student needing to terminate lessons/withdraw from the Academy, either temporarily or permanently, and for any reason, shall give 30 days' notice in writing to the Teacher. \_\_\_\_\_***

The Academy takes seriously its commitment to an exceptional program, and reserves the right to dismiss any student due to frequent tardiness or missed lessons, behavioral problems, lack of consistency or discipline in practicing, delinquency in payment of fees, failure to abide by policy, or other serious misconduct. \_\_\_\_\_



# TUITION, FEES & PAYMENT INFORMATION

## ACADEMY TUITION:

LESSON LENGTH	ANNUAL TUITION	MONTHLY TUITION – Due by the last day of the previous month
30 minutes	\$1665.00	\$185.00
45 minutes	\$2258.00	\$251.00
60 minutes	\$2838.00	\$315.00
75 minutes	\$3350.00	\$372.00

### INCLUDES:

- ♪ **32 Private Lessons between August 28, 2023 to May 31, 2024**
  - ♪ 17 Group Classes between September 2023 through May 2024
  - ♪ 2 Solo & Group Performances
  - ♪ Participation in possible Community Performances
  - ♪ Administrative Fees & Teacher Professional Development
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## REQUIRED FEES:

- ♪ Annual Studio Fee for First-Time Student (Studio Resources, Lesson Tote Bag, Membership in Southeast Texas Suzuki Association) - \$60, due upon enrollment for 2023-24 Academic Year
  - ♪ Annual Studio Fee for additional First-Time Student in the same family/household - \$35, due upon enrollment
  - ♪ Annual Studio Fee for Returning Student - \$40, due upon enrollment for 2023-24 Academic Year
  - ♪ Annual Studio Fee for additional Returning Student in the same family/household - \$20, due upon enrollment
  - ♪ New Student Materials Packet, including all materials needed for the Academic Year - Amount based on individual student needs, and decided with teacher during 1<sup>st</sup> lesson, due by 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson
  - ♪ Fees are Non-Refundable
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## PAYMENT PROCESSING:

- ♪ Tuition payment options: 9 Monthly Payments as listed above, 3 Quarterly Payments, or 1 Annual Payment due upon enrollment
  - ♪ Payments are due by the last day of the month, for the following month, and are considered late if not received within 5 calendar days of that date. A late fee totaling 10% of the payment due will be charged if payment is not received by 5 calendar days after the due date. Late fee will be increased to 20% of monthly payment if not received by 10 calendar days after the due date.
  - ♪ **Any payment more than 10 days late will result in suspension of private lessons and group classes/ensembles until the payment is resolved.**
  - ♪ Payments will only be accepted via Zelle, Venmo, credit card (4% PayPal processing fee added) or check. Please contact Ms. Sharon if you are not able to pay via these methods.
  - ♪ **All payments are non-refundable.**
  - ♪ Tuition rates will be increased by approximately 2% annually in order to reflect inflation/cost of living increases.
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# SOLO & GROUP PERFORMANCE

## INFORMATION GUIDE

Each student in the Academy is expected to perform in both Group Performances, and at least once each year on a Solo Recital. The piece selected to perform on a Solo Recital should be a polished piece. Your child's teacher will help them to choose a piece that represents their best playing. Your child's piece should be fully polished (played with virtually no mistakes) 30 days prior to the scheduled recital.

### FIVE REASONS WHY THE SUZUKI ACADEMY STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN PERFORMANCES:

1. A performance is an important tradition in the journey of a young musician.
2. It is a very special event that provides performing experience necessary for all musicians, and an opportunity for us to gather as a community and celebrate the achievements of the year.
3. Our performances offer a wonderful opportunity for our students to build their self-confidence as a musician by performing in front of a supportive and non-judgmental audience.
4. The performance experience provides the student musician with an un-pressured, encouraging, and non-competitive atmosphere for performing.
5. The performance experience is an integral part of the Academy's curriculum.

### RECITAL ATTIRE

Performers should dress appropriately for this formal event. Consider this when getting your child dressed, or helping them make a good decision regarding their attire. They should not wear anything that might restrict their movement, and they should practice in their performance attire before the concert to be sure they are comfortable.

Examples of clothing suitable for public performance are:

- Dresses, nice skirts of appropriate length (***below the knees when seated***), blouses, or dress pants and dress shirts for girls.
  - Girls should wear their hair pulled/pinned back and out of their face. Pony-tails and buns are excellent choices. Boys should have a haircut if needed prior to performance day. ***We must be able to see your eyes!***
  - Dress pants with belts and dress shirts (tucked-in) and sweaters for boys (no suit jackets).
  - Dress shoes for both girls and boys (boys wear dark shoes with dark socks).
  - Dangling earrings and beaded necklaces should be avoided as they will rattle against the instrument.
  - Please show respect to your audience by not wearing: jeans, miniskirts, shorts, tank tops or spaghetti straps, midriff shirts, flip-flops, high heels, Crocs, or sport shoes.
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## PERFORMANCE ETIQUETTE

Because performances are such a special event, you will want to be sure to invite family and friends! As an audience, our job is to provide a respectful setting in which our performers can offer the best of their skills and talents and display an exemplary standard of behavior. Unfortunately, children are seldom exposed to formal concert situations and are often not aware of these standards of behavior. The performance is an opportunity to teach our children how to behave appropriately in a concert situation. The performances we will see represent months and years of dedicated effort and reflect the students' musical development. We want all of the students to enjoy their performances and benefit from this experience.

Consider the following carefully:

- Please arrive between 20-30 minutes prior to the recital/concert time, for unpacking and tuning. We want to start on time and will need everyone's cooperation to do so.
  - **All Academy students performing are expected to attend the full duration of the performance. Students who plan to "play and leave" will be seen as inconsiderate and unsupportive of their fellow performers.**
  - If a baby or young child becomes unhappy and vocal, please feel free to leave the performance area immediately and as quietly as possible. Otherwise, please stay seated during all performances as movement can be very distracting to a performer. If necessary, you may get up and move during the applause.
  - **Flash photography is not allowed during the performance.** Video photography will be permitted (and is encouraged) only if the video camera is held quietly by one person who remains seated. Please do not block other parents/family members who are watching the performers. You may also feel free to "stage" a performance *after* the recital if you wish to get an "action" photograph.
  - **Please silence all cell phones and other devices. Text messaging during the concert is also inappropriate.**
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