AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS AND SKILLS NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASS: A MODIFIED DELPHI TECHNIQUE STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to attempt to find out which components and skills experts agree are foundational for a successful, first-year string-instrument, K-8 classroom. Subjects were first-year beginning string students with no previous playing experience. A three-round, modified Delphi Technique, involving a panel of twenty experts, was used to seek consensus on issues.

Round 1 consisted of 40 questions/statements on six topics: general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the state of first-year string education today; teaching location; variables relating to class structure such as age, class size, class frequency, class length, and class grouping (heterogeneous/homogeneous); method books; first-year performances; and, a section of additional topics.

At the completion of Round 1, there were nine items for which consensus was reached: 1) community schools provide a positive teaching location; 2) commercial music houses are not suitable for teaching first-year string classes; 3) age 3-5 is too young to start beginning string in a class setting; 4) 45 minutes is an ideal class length; 5) a beginning string class should meet 2-3 times a week; 6) 25 or more students is too large a class size; 7) there should be minimum standards and requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string classes; 8) it is wrong not to have a performance by the first-year, K-8 string class; and, 9) ASTA should be the
primary tool for disseminating information to string professionals. These items were
excluded from Round 2 because consensus had been attained.

Round 2 was a refinement of Round 1. The comments made by the panelists in
Round 1 and the items that had not reached consensus in Round 1, formed the basis for
new questions/statements in Round 2.

In Round 3, consensus was reached on most items. Consensus was not reached on
two topics: 1) whether the panelists perceive that there is more ear training in first-year
string class than 10-15 years ago; and, 2) whether having an ability to pace a lesson
appropriately and having a sense of humor are among the two most important attributes
for a teacher of first-year string class to have.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii  
Acknowledgements v  
Vita vii  

Chapters:

1. Introduction 1  
   Background 1  
   Objectives of the Study 7  
   Value of the Study 7  
   Need for the Study 8  
   Statement of the Problem 9  
   Limitations of the Study 9  
   Definition of Terms 10  

2. Review of the Literature 13  
   Literature of Pedagogues and Practitioners 13  
   Literature of Research on String Instrument Instruction 29  
   Literature on the Delphi Technique 30  

3. Procedures 39  
   Introduction 39  
   Round 1 42  
   Round 2 46  
   Round 3 48  

4. Results 51  
   Introduction 51  
   Round 1 Survey Procedures 52  
   Round 1 Survey Numerical Results 53  
   Round 1 Summary of Results 65  
   Round 2 Survey Procedures 67  
   Round 2 Survey Numerical Results 69  
   Round 2 Summary of Results 88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 3 Survey Procedures</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 3 Survey Numerical Results</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 3 Summary of Results</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Summary, Discussion/Implications, and Recommendations</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Study</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Implications of the Findings</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Research</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Expert Panel Members</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>E-mail Invitation to Panel Members</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>E-mail Letter to State Supervisors</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>State Music Supervisors Nomination Form</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>E-mail Invitation to Practitioners</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>E-mail Instructions to Survey Panelists</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Instructions to Pilot Study Members</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Invitation to Validity Panel Members</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Round 1 Survey Greeting</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Round 1 Survey Thank You</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Survey Instructions to Hard Copy Users</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Round 2 Survey Greeting</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>Round 2 Survey Thank You</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix N</td>
<td>Round 3 Survey Greeting</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix O</td>
<td>Round 3 Survey Thank You</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix P</td>
<td>Round 1 Survey Instrument Written Results</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Q</td>
<td>Round 2 Survey Instrument Written Results</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix R</td>
<td>Round 3 Survey Instrument Written Results</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of References**

272
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first year of study is a crucial period in the development of the beginning string player. It is a time during which the young player must learn many skills – some obvious, others more subtle. If the beginner learns these skills well, the foundation is set for future development, and subsequent progress with the instrument is more likely to occur (Lowe, 1980, p. 509).

Background

The present study is directed to the first year of a young string student’s experience in a public or private school setting. The formal teaching of string instruments in public school classes in the United States is less than 100 years old. Allen (1993) writes that,

Public school string class teaching began in Boston in 1911 with Albert Gore Mitchell. The idea of teaching strings in classes was inspired by a phenomenon…that came to be known as the Maidstone Movement. In Maidstone, England, the Murdock Music Co. pioneered the idea of making stringed instruments available to poor students on a rental basis. As a result of this idea, large numbers of students were able to study strings. The first Annual Festival in Maidstone occurred in 1904 with 700 string players, and by 1914, there were 6,800 participants (p. 65).

In a thorough overview of a history of string programs in the United States, Turner (2001) informs the reader that,

As Albert Mitchell reported from his own experience with the early violin classes he established in the Boston schools, adjustments needed to be made to
accommodate group instruction: “During the first two years of violin class teaching in Boston, mechanical difficulties were encountered of which the private teacher has no conception”…Duane H. Haskell, the first president of the American String Teachers Association, stated in a 1954 AST article: “Many violin teachers did not realize that violin class teaching required entirely new methods and procedures. Conventional private teaching methods were generally unsuccessful when applied to the class situation” (pp. 76-77).

In a review of the historical roots of string education in the United States and the changes that have occurred, Allen (1993) concludes that, In our currently published string class method books, the changes from the early methods of our pioneers are slight. The changes that have occurred are more a reflection of our society and the manner in which we present the material…The thoroughness with which Mitchell organized the first class method has not been drastically improved upon…The primary difference between the established form of conservatory-style private teaching and public school class teaching is the necessity of organizing each step in playing so that nothing is left out and all students can succeed (p. 69).

Offering a different view of the status of string methods, Sarch (1996) says that, “Individual and class methods continue to improve and change, offering us better formats, more comprehensive materials for technical and musical development, and music more relevant to today’s broader cultural interests” (p. 53). Thus, we can see that there are widely differing views on the status of string methods used in the United States as reported in the literature.

Generally, there are three ways of grouping string instrument classes:

1) Homogeneously, with each of the four string instruments (violin, viola, cello, double bass) taught separately; 2) homogeneously, with violin and viola taught together and, cello and bass taught together; and, 3) heterogeneously, with all four string instruments taught together in the same classroom. Regarding this same issue, Trzcinski (1963) states that, “Some teachers favor the procedure of grouping like instruments; others prefer to
instruct mixed group” (p. 9). A more recent statement, that echoes Trzcinski, comes from Mishra (2000). She states that,

There are many ways of organizing a beginning string class. Some teachers prefer to teach in a homogeneous setting, where students perform on one type of instrument, others prefer to teach in heterogeneous classes, where each instrument is represented. Opinions differ on whether a homogeneous setting, where the teacher can focus on technique and problems presented by one instrument, or a heterogeneous setting, which allows for an ensemble experience, is preferable (p. 3).

These references seem to indicate that whether a class is grouped heterogeneously or homogeneously is largely based on personal preference. Does it make a difference, from a pedagogical standpoint?

Divergent opinions also exist regarding rote or note instruction for the beginning string class. Green (1966) states, “The string player will play by rote and by ear for an appreciable period before going to the music” (p. 1). Certainly Suzuki and Rolland advocate extensive periods of rote before note. Although Applebaum (1986) doesn’t explicitly address this issue and his String Builder Book 1 begins with a note approach, he has a whole section of skills development by rote (pp. 159-178).

Despite these differences in opinions, Lloyd (1996) in a positive report on the state of string education in the United States, declares that,

Nowhere in the world has string class teaching been as successful as in the United States. Generally, string teaching around the world is done outside the regular school day through private lessons. In the United States, however, heterogeneous string classes are taught in the public schools, beginning normally in the fourth- to sixth-grade years (p. 64).
In the 1960s, Sinichi Suzuki brought a troupe of young violinists who played to awestruck American audiences. This event produced renewed interest in string teaching. At the same time, but separately, Paul Rolland also pioneered a new approach that emphasized the importance of the child acquiring freedom of physical movement.

In addition, George Bornoff, Eta Cohen, Kato Havas, Elizabeth Green, and others have offered well-documented systems that appear to be excellent and credible and have been adopted by some string teachers. However, even with the advent of these new approaches, it appears that only a small minority of string teachers has enough knowledge of these newer approaches to be able to implement them properly and adequately. Lloyd (1996) notes that, “Most school teachers are eclectic in their approach, adapting pedagogical ideas from Paul Rolland, Shinichi Suzuki, Elizabeth Green, Phyllis Young, and George Bornoff, to name but a few” (p.65).

Since each community, school district, and region in which string teachers are positioned is a political entity, each is going to have its own agenda and structure for carrying out the teaching of beginning string classes. The overarching question, then, is whether or not enough of these political entities are doing an adequate job in teaching beginning string classes. We need to ask if there are some critical factors that identify good string teaching in the first year that should be included in each school or school district regardless of its political and cultural biases.

Several universities have leading string pedagogues who attract pre-service string teachers to their institutions. Some of these include Robert Gillespie at The Ohio State University, Michael Allen, at Florida State University, Phyllis Young at The University of Texas, Austin, Jacqueline Dillon at Wichita State University in Kansas, Robert Culver
at the University of Michigan, and Gerald Fischbach at the University of Maryland, College Park. These are people who have developed tangible methods on how to teach string instruments in the classroom. Their published work would suggest that there are a growing number of teachers who are better prepared for teaching in the beginning string class.

Yet, while there is evidence that more teachers are better trained and that the number of string programs in the public schools is growing, there is, in fact, a shortage of string teachers (Baumer, 2001; Dillon-Krass, 1993; Hamann, 2002; Kjelland, 1996). School districts often must fill string positions with teachers whose primary instrument is not a string instrument (Allard, 1995; Burch, 2001; Chusmir, 1974; and, Jenkins, 1995). This has created another area of debate in the music education world regarding whether the non-string teacher should be teaching a first-year beginning string class where critical foundations need to be established. One reason for the debate springs from the fact that there are some excellent teachers of first-year string classes whose primary instrument is not a string instrument.

It would seem that there is uneven string education at the university and college level since less than 5% of all NASM institutions of higher learning have music education faculty whose primary responsibility is string teacher training. In addition, although there is a growing body of knowledge regarding string education, not all string teachers are able to access this knowledge. Among some of the reasons for this are: 1) The teacher does not have access to a computer, 2) the teacher has little contact or no contact with other string teachers, 3) the teacher does not subscribe to trade publications, and 4) the teacher cannot or does not attend local, regional, or national meetings. This
would contribute to the possibility that there is an uneven quality in how beginner strings are taught.

An example of a byproduct of the differences in school districts across the United States is highlighted by Faust (1963) whose description of a first-year string class puts into juxtaposition the confusion as to whether it is the method that produces results or the teaching environment that produces results. She reported that in her school, in which she was principal, they experimented for one year with twelve 4th-grade boys and girls using what she called the Suzuki-Kendall method of string instruction. She says,

The class met during each school day for a thirty-minute period of instruction. The children used school-owned instruments, all half-size. No out-of-class practice was permitted; thus all of the children’s study was under the direct supervision of the instructor. Because this was part of the regular school program, there was no charge for the use of the instruments or for the instruction (p. 18).

She continues, “In terms of the progress of the class, it was felt by all observers that this was a superior method” (ibid.). However, it would be difficult to determine from the description alone, which variables were key to this program’s success. For example, of the two variables, 1) The students met daily and 2) The students only practiced under supervision, is one more important than the other? In any case, it certainly appears that this situation, as a whole, provided an ideal teaching climate.

And finally, another area relevant for string teachers is the underlying concerns of the place of music in general education. Walker (1998) raises some very interesting points that address these concerns:

So at issue is both the approach and purpose of music education from a musical perspective (skills and doing versus more intellectual pursuits) and, once there is some agreement in terms of educational delivery on this particular dichotomy, how a reconstituted music education might fit into the contemporary curriculum lie in its unhappy and sometimes incommensurate mixtures of notions of
educating the whole child, back to the basics, relevant skills for the work-place, generic skills applicable to all human activities, subject integration, and the ensuring of standards, etc....For music educators, the task ahead is clear: get into the debate about what education is for and what its goals should be. Don’t waste time in advocacy about music and its educational value in a curricula vacuum (p. 58).

When one reads the string literature and talks with string teachers from different regions and states, one becomes aware that there are a variety of teaching situations, approaches, sequencings, and materials being used. It is this panoply of responses and the dearth of replicated research regarding the necessary components and skills of the successful first-year string class that led to the topic of this dissertation.

**Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine: 1) Which components and skills are necessary for structuring a successful first-year string class, at the elementary level, as suggested in the literature, and 2) which components and skills are necessary for structuring a successful first-year string class, at the elementary level, as determined by a consensus of today’s experts.

**Value of the Study**

The importance of a beginning string student experiencing a successful first year is paramount. Pedagogues have stated that the success of a beginning string class, at the elementary level, is based upon students receiving instruction that provides a good foundation (Allen, 2003; Lowe, 1980). Dillon & Kriechbaum (1978), suggest that basic skills need to be presented to string students in the following order: learning rhythm fundamentals (clap), positioning instruments, learning open strings pizzicato (rote), preparing to follow a printed line (teacher points to notes on the board), learning to
follow a printed line (book), learning to finger notes while reading from the book, learning to bow open strings (rote), bowing open strings while reading notes, bowing and fingering together (rote), bowing and fingering together while reading notes (p. 63). These authors further suggest that well-developed playing and musicianship skills can be used as a foundation for the efficient development of more advanced skills in later years.

In a recent publication, Hamann & Gillespie (2004) devote a chapter that offers guidelines for teaching first-year string classes. They suggest that, “Much time must be spent reviewing previously introduced skills so that good posture, instrument and left-hand positions, bowing skill habits, and a high standard of intonation can be firmly established” (p. 29). If certain components and skills can be identified as being necessary to the first-year string class, then this knowledge will provide teachers with a framework for structuring optimal instruction and experiences for their students. To date, however, there has been little research that identifies the specific components and skills that define a good foundation.

**Need for the Study**

At this time, there is nothing that serves to unite the methodology in the teaching of classroom strings, in this country, other than 1) the use of the dozen or so commercially available method books, and 2) the various string method classes available at some universities and colleges. Although there is a growing body of research in the area of string education, there is very little research that addresses the structure and approaches used in the first-year string class, at the elementary level.

Some of the variables, such as age of the beginner, class size, frequency and length, are reported as trends or as isolated data in the literature. However, there are few
studies that have made an attempt to determine whether, for example, a certain age is better or best for beginning a string instrument in a classroom setting, or a certain class size works better than another.

It is difficult to determine which variables cause success in a first-year string class in the K-8 public school setting, as in the Faust (1963) description. Therefore, the need for this study was based on the belief that to compare the skills and components of a first-year string class, as reported in the literature, with the perceptions and opinions of a panel of string experts, would yield data that may serve as a basis for future study and research.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem investigated was: What specific components and skills do today’s experts agree are foundational for a successful, first-year string-instrument K-8 classroom?

**Limitations of the Study**

There are many other components and attributes of the first-year string program that could have been investigated in this study. This study is limited to the following:

1) General perception of string teaching in the U.S., 2) preference for location of string class teaching, 3) preference of age of beginner string student, 4) preference of group/individual lessons, 5) preference of size of a beginner string class, 6) preference for length of beginner string class, 7) preference for heterogeneous or homogeneous grouping of beginner string class, 8) preference for use of method books, 9) preference for number of performances of beginner string class, 10) preference for general music background of beginner string class, 11) preference for use of 4th finger, all four strings, positions/position changes in beginner string class, and 12) descriptions of the ideal
focus, components, pace, attributes of teacher, and ideas for change in the beginner string class.

**Definition of Terms**

**Delphi Technique:** A survey method that utilizes an anonymous committee-of-experts approach. There are usually 3-5 separate questionnaires, called *rounds*, in the typical survey. The purpose of this method is to gain group consensus on the issues that are presented by the survey administrator. In Round 1, the questions/statements are usually open-ended and the group responses provide the basis for the Round 2. Panelists are expected to read through the responses of Round 1 before responding to Round 2. In addition, those panelists who respond outside the consensus area are expected to defend their stance or join the consensus group. Round 3 is a further refinement of Round 2. It is hoped that consensus will be reached on many of the issues after three rounds. Research has shown that if consensus is going to occur, it usually does so within three rounds.

**Modified Delphi Technique:** This differs from the traditional Delphi Technique in that the survey administrator writes questions for Round 1 that are more structured and are based on research and other professional literature. Few or no open-ended questions or statements are used.

**Panel of Experts:** This is comprised of the 20 participants who served on the survey panel for this study and who met the criteria for being an expert in their particular professional area. The criteria were: 1) each expert has experience in teaching first-year string players, 2) is knowledgeable, informed, and professionally respected and, 3) each is deeply interested in the problem and will have experiences to share.
Expert Pedagogue: A person who is nationally known, knowledgeable of first-year string teaching and has conducted research, taught, and/or written/lectured on the subject.

Expert Practitioner: A person with an exemplary teaching record and recognition by their administrators and peers as an outstanding teacher of first-year string students.

Expert Performer/Studio Teacher: A person with a proven track record of excellence as exemplified in performance of students and recognition by their peers as an outstanding teacher of a string instrument. In addition, they have recordings that are sold commercially, and/or are frequent public performers.

Expert Administrator: A person who has been active at the helm of an organization that includes first-year string classes and who demonstrates a thorough knowledge of string pedagogy.

Survey Administrator: In this case, the survey administrator is the sole author of this study.

Rounds 1, 2, and 3: Each round was a separate questionnaire/survey. Rounds 2 and 3 were based on the responses of the previous round. Panelists were given 1 week to respond to the survey.

Iteration: This is similar to repetition. More specifically it designates, in a mathematical sense, “a method in which a succession of approximations, each building on the one preceding, is used to achieve a desired degree of accuracy” (Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, 1999).

Consensus: For this study, consensus was reached when there was 80% (n=16) agreement in any one response, or 80% agreement fell within two categories in three,
four, or five-point Likert-type scales. For Yes/No responses, 80% (n=16) agreement constituted consensus.

Questions/Statements: This term is used throughout this study and in Rounds 1, 2, and 3 of the survey instrument. Because the items in the survey instruments were combinations of questions and statements, as well as additional comments, the word question and the word statement were combined for the sake of consistency. In Chapter 4, the term Question(s)/Statement(s) is shortened to Q/S when the responses are discussed.

Ideal: Survey participants were asked to define ideal as a standard of excellence. In addition they were asked to suspend, for the purpose of the survey, reality; i.e., those everyday situations or entities that may restrict one’s ability to achieve the ideal.

Launching: The event of sending the survey to all survey panelists via the Internet.

Zoomerang: A commercial, web-based survey program with a variety of design features.

Pilot Panel Members: These members were instructed to review the instrument for clarity of the questions/statements and ease of using the initial instrument. The panel members are active as teachers of first-year string students in K-12 public and/or private classrooms.

Validity Panel Members: These members were asked to judge the degree to which the questions and statements in each of the Modified Delphi instruments (3 Rounds) were appropriate to the purpose stated and were clearly expressed (content and face validity).

ASTA: American String Teachers Association

First-Year String Class: A class of young children (K-8) for whom this is their first experience with a string instrument. This phrase will be used interchangeably with the phrase beginning string class throughout this study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews the literature written by string pedagogues, practitioners, and researchers that is germane to the topic of teaching in the first-year string class. The second section reviews literature pertinent to the understanding of and rationale for the use of the Delphi Technique as a part of this study.

**Literature by Pedagogues and Practitioners**

“The most important year in the instrumentalist’s musical life is the beginning year as it is during this time that the basic foundation will be laid for all the years that follow. How this year is handled has a profound effect on whether the student will continue or not, and even more important what kind of musician the student is to become” (Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978, p.55).

Since much string literature is directed to instruction on violin, the bulk of this review will be drawn from these resources. This is appropriate since the goal of string teaching, whether for the individual lesson or the classroom setting, or for the violin, viola, cello, or the bass, remains the same: to provide the beginning string student with a solid and dependable technical foundation on which to build musical expression and to expand creative abilities (Stoeving, 1921; Yarborough, 1968).

Those who have had a long-term commitment to the education of young people, particularly in the area of pedagogy in the string instrument classroom, and those who are actively teaching in the first-year string classroom have written most of the literature that is reviewed here. This review examines, primarily: 1) pedagogical approaches for the first-
year string class, 2) structure and organization of the beginner string class, and 3) the content used in the beginning string class. The topics of philosophy, learning theories, talent/ability, specific technical skills, motivation, strategies, practicing, parent involvement, and assessment are not addressed in this study (Asmus, 1999; Gillespie, 1989; Goolsby, 1999; Palac, 1999; Pitts, Davidson & McPherson, 2000; Schneiderman, 2001; Wallick, 1998).

Among the earliest extant literature on string playing are those of Geminiani who published a treatise, *The Art of Playing on the Violin* in 1751, and Leopold Mozart, father to Wolfgang Amadeus, who published his *Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* in 1756. Both of these treatises are very detailed and thorough. Boyden, in his introduction to Geminiani (1751) suggests, however, that Geminiani’s treatise, when compared to Mozart’s, “looks primarily to the past.” Mozart’s treatise, on the other hand, has some remarkably up-to-date content. For example, when explaining the importance of a student receiving a proper start on the violin, he states, “I was often sad when I found that pupils had been so badly taught; that not only had I to set them back to the beginning, but that great pains had to be taken to eradicate the faults which had been taught, or at best had been overlooked” (p. 7). What string teacher today has not lamented similar experiences? And later, Leopold Mozart takes issue with a topic very current in our day, also, of whether or not the marking of the fingerboard with markers is advisable, exclaiming,

At this point I cannot but touch on the foolish system of teaching which is pursued by some when instructing their pupils; namely, that of affixing little labels with the letters thereon, on the finger-board of the pupil’s violin, and even of marking the place of each note on the side of the finger-board with a deep incision or, at least, with a notch. If the pupil has a good musical ear, one must avail oneself of such an extravagance. If, however, he lacks this, he is useless for music and it were better he took a wood-axe than a violin in his hand (p. 62).
Mozart’s vehemence, regarding the greatness of the difficulties produced by poor teaching at the very beginning of the string student’s experience, is equally resounded today. His statement exhorts the importance of a string student being given the very best foundation in technical skills. Fletcher (1989) describes what constitutes foundational learning, as used in the context of this study, very well:

It should never be forgotten that instrumental playing is a skill. If learning an instrument is to lead to a lifetime of enjoyment rather than a lifetime of frustration, it is necessary that the skills of any instrument be taught correctly and thoroughly from the start (p. 141).

The question that this study hopes to address is: what constitutes a good foundation for the beginning string class? In the context of this study, foundation means those skills deemed necessary for a string student to acquire in the first year in order to be successful in future learning. And, as a corollary to the above question, is it even possible or desirable to quantify the component variables related to the teaching of first-year string players?

Pedagogical Approaches to the Beginning String Classes

There are many known approaches on how to teach a string instrument in both the private and the classroom setting. Some approaches encompass an entire method, while others simply take a narrower stand and only address a few sequences or, perhaps, only one particular skill.

A few of the leading string-teaching pedagogical approaches (e.g., Bornoff, Green, Havas, Rolland, and Suzuki) and some of the writers of the current, leading method books have much in common with each other. In addition, some of them draw upon pedagogical principles used in general education. For example, much music
education pedagogy is based on Pestalozzian doctrine. Efland’s (1983) paper explains that Pestalozzi believed that “there must be a continuity in teaching, progressing from the simple to the complex” (p. 168). Piaget and Dewey would have agreed with this also.

Another pedagogical approach, The Alexander Technique, according to Farrell (1963),

educates, or reeducates, a person to permit natural postural reflex actions to operate during movements, such as one may observe in children…The effect of the Technique in string playing is that playing tends to become effortless; ideally, effort in the sense of muscular effort, tends to disappear, so that the player is free to think in terms of his musical image” (p. 12).

Stein (1999) adds that, the “Alexander Technique teachers make clear to the student that it is more important to take care of the body than to get the passage right” (p. 73). It would seem that these thoughts are important for the teacher of a beginning string class, especially since so many adult string players suffer from debilitating physical problems related to their playing a string instrument. McCullough (1996) in her dissertation about The Alexander Technique and the pedagogy of Paul Rolland tersely reports that,

The deterioration of the back and overall psycho-physical condition of most children and adults has rendered the complex job of teaching violin and viola to students even more difficult. By the time they are mid-way through their college years, many string students have developed neuro-muscular pain that is often debilitating (p. 5).

Rhythm training through movement and singing has been espoused by a number of pedagogues during the last century. Riveire (1995, 1996) says, “both Paul Rolland and Kato Havas have emphasized it in their work…a carefully structured class that focuses on rhythm training and uses rhythmic movement for 25 percent of the class time facilitates the steady progress and early achievement of beginning string players” (p.26). Chapman
(1970) gives suggestions as to how to incorporate Havas’ New Approach in the violin classes. The Dalcroze approach also emphasizes learning through movement (Palmquist, 1998).

Many articles have been written that compare the work of Orff, Kodaly, Suzuki, Rolland, and Dalcroze (e.g., Bondurdant-Koehler & Koehler, 1998; Lyne, 1998; Mitchell, 1998; New Approaches to String Instruction, 1994). These articles give numerous suggestions as to the ways a teacher might incorporate the ideas of these pedagogues into the beginning string class.

With the advent of new approaches, the traditional approach to string teaching needed definition. Barber (1993) makes an interesting comparison between traditional and Suzuki teaching. She states that:

> It is only because of the tremendous impact that Suzuki instruction has had on string education that we even added the term “traditional teaching” to our string vocabulary. Before Suzuki’s ideas were introduced in the United States nearly 30 years ago, what we now call traditional teaching was the customary way of teaching string instruments. The traditional style of string teaching as we know it today is a real challenge to define since it is based on several hundred years of the development of the European schools of pedagogy and repertoire handed down from generation to generation. Each of us can trace our own musical lineage through the teachers with whom we have studied…(p. 33)

The Suzuki approach, in particular, has produced a legacy of misconceptions in the United States (Barber, 1993; Kjelland, 1997). Lee (1992) also cautions about the discrepancy in the U.S. regarding how the Suzuki approach is used,

> Inspired private teachers and string teachers in American public schools eagerly set out to emulate the accomplishments of Suzuki’s Talent Education movement. However, many of these early experiments failed primarily because the teachers lacked the understanding and knowledge to utilize the mother-tongue theory. Additionally, the performances of the tour groups were misinterpreted by the public school string teachers who assumed that Talent Education based its teaching on large groups” (p. 4).
In a dissertation by Nelson (1994) titled *Twentieth-century violin technique: The contributions of six major pedagogues*, the work of Auer, Flesch, Galamian, Havas, Rolland, and Suzuki are examined. It gives detailed analysis of the similarities and differences in how string skills were taught by these well-known teachers. Klotman (1996) also includes detailed comparisons of technical features of Havas, Rolland, and Suzuki (p. 41).

One of the more interesting topics in the string world concerns comparisons between Suzuki and Rolland. In an interview with Smith (1973), Rolland states, “The Illinois youth program (which by the way, started about fifteen years before Suzuki became a household name) contained many of the features attributed to Suzuki today” (p. 84). Earlier in the article he attributes his own ideas to Rados, Waldbauer, Alexander, Polnauer, Totenberg, Galamian, Temianka, and his own Hungarian training that is now known as the Kodaly method.

And, Beegle (2000) suggests that:

The most notable similarities of Dalcroze, Kodaly, and Orff to Suzuki teaching include: the importance of starting young, an emphasis on music listening, sequential presentation concepts, teaching through experience, and preparing the environment. Contemporary educator Edwin Gordon, a leading researcher of the natural sequence of music learning since the 1960s, confirmed similar ideas in his research through which he proposed a formal Music Learning Theory. Gordon believes that “one’s potential to learn is never greater than at the moment of birth” (1990, 1) (p. 92).

According to Gordon (1993), all music learning, like language learning, is first perceived aurally. This learning begins informally at birth, or earlier, and may take years to develop. Gordon calls the first stage “music babble” and likens it to speech babble.
(p. 4). Gordon’s music learning theory is similar to language learning theory and is reminiscent of Suzuki’s “mother tongue” method. Suzuki’s view is succinctly reported in the following passage from Barber (1993):

Dr. Suzuki calls his plan the “mother-tongue approach” since it follows the same procedure by which children learn to speak their native language: exposure, imitation, encouragement, repetition, addition, and refinement. The student learns to play by imitating the recorded pieces he listens to many times each day. He internalizes each piece first and then is shown how to recreate it on the instrument (p. 34).

With his approach, Suzuki (1983) posits that a child learns to speak by informally listening to his/her mother’s speech (pp. 1-2). As the mother voices words and sounds over and over, the child babbles back. Those sounds that are positively reinforced by parents and other adults become more structured and are finally included in the child’s personal lexicon. Suzuki instruction always begins with listening.

In the American Suzuki Journal, Schneiderman (2001) contributes a pedagogical viewpoint regarding the importance of modeling in the first years of string training, when she fervently states that,

We need to show our students ‘how to do it’ so they won’t feel that insecurity and doubt of asking themselves ‘can I do it?’ – or worse, coming to believe they can’t…With nourishing assistance, their love of music and their pleasure in it will have a better chance to survive and bloom well into adulthood (p. 62).

Another issue that needs to be addressed is pre-string-instrument training in the elementary schools. In some districts there are strong general music programs in place from kindergarten through 5th grade. Other districts have none or, at best, the elementary grade teacher is expected to cover this area in his/her day-to-day teaching. Often these teachers have little training, motivation, or time to incorporate general music principles
into their daily lesson plans (Bennett, 1992; Bryson, 1982; Byo, 1999; Gerber, 1992; Kinder, 1988).

**Structure and Organization of the Elementary Beginning String Class**

The primary area of concern in this section are the following variables: 1) desirable age of a string-instrument beginner, 2) size of the first-year string classroom, 3) frequency of class meetings for the first-year string class, 4) length of class meeting for the first-year string class, and 5) homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping of classes.

Mullins (1996), in an interview with Marvin Rabin, says that Rabin “believes that everything grows out of structure” (p. 702). Continuing, Rabin says it also requires “broad community support and sufficient financial resources to hire the best people” (ibid.). Rohr (1967) discusses ways to organize an elementary string program. She suggests building up a supply of school-owned string instruments over time to increase community interest in the program. Temianka (1967) echoes this sentiment saying, 

The key to the solution of the American string problem lies in the enlightenment of the communities in which we live. Symphony orchestras, like museums, libraries, parks, and schools, are vital cultural assets to a civilized community. If we can effectively convey this simple truth to our fellow citizens we shall solve the string problem” (p. 404). Twenty years later, Gillespie (1987) states, “A key to survival of orchestra programs in the public schools today is development of community support…only then will public school orchestra programs be spared when school district budget-cutting time comes” (p. 52).

**Desirable age of player beginning a string instrument**

A work, *The Violin and How to Master It*, written by a professional player (1883), proposes that the proper age of beginning a string instrument is between 8 and 12. Others have suggested ages varying from 2-16 (Knocker, 1952; Starr, 1997; Stoeving, 1921; Suzuki, 1983). Most of the literature is non-specific regarding the desirable age of the
beginner string player. The beginner is usually described as a child or a very young child. An even more vague designation for the beginner is “pupil,” again without a specific age ascribed. Also, much of the literature that outlines a particular syllabus or course of instruction, for the beginner class, does not specify the age for which it would be most appropriate.

The string literature is replete with data regarding the age of beginning string students. However, there is little clear discussion of the merits of a student beginning at one age or another. Therefore, a need exists for dialog and research on this topic.

In addition, I would suggest that we seem to have adopted a one-size-fits-all stance with the content of string class instruction and beginning age of string instruction. For example, Heller (1990) points out that, “With students of different ages, the sequence of instruction is critical, and the styles of presentation will need to vary…but much remains to be done before music educators understand just how best to present concepts to children of various ages and grade levels” (p. 6).

As can be seen from the quote above, another aspect of this topic is the ease with which we interchange the words age and grade. This may be a small matter, yet it is another example of the lack of precision that sometimes peppers our language. If interchanging these two words doesn’t matter, we need to know this. If it does matter, then we need to understand why and make an attempt to establish clearer language.

Delzell & Doerksen (1998) present a comprehensive review of research literature relating to the grade level for beginning instrument music. They found that, “data on beginning instrumental music programs are not being systematically tracked at the
national level so that current practices as well as trends can be determined” (p. 18).

Along the same lines, they also found that,

Unfortunately, national data on patterns regarding the relationship between the grade level strings start as compared to band are not available. In research on Ohio school districts, Delzell (1989) found that a large percentage (38%) of the districts offered strings and band for the first time at the same grade level. The size of this percentage would likely surprise those who believe strings are almost always offered at least a year before band (p. 21).

They cite the following factors and variables as being determinants for districts when they make decisions regarding the age/grade level of the beginner string class:

“grade configuration of school buildings in the district, number of instrumental music staff, and fiscal realities” (ibid.). They suggest that music teachers,

Weigh several additional factors, including degree of access to instrumental music allowed in each grade level’s academic scheduling model, classroom environments available for instrumental music at the various grade levels, and the relationship between starting grades of string and band programs. It is particularly important that attention be given to possible differences in instructional time allotments for the various options (p. 21).

Wallace (1990) met with Eta Cohen, a well-known and highly regarded violin teacher in England, and reports that Cohen “is against starting [pupils] before school, feeling that the early years are the time for playing music games without instruments” (p. 804). She continues with a direct quote from Cohen:

There’s nothing particularly “natural” about playing the violin and letting a very young child grasp the violin could lead to a lot of unlearning later on. I like to start them at five and six when they can concentrate and understand how delicate an operation playing the violin is. I make marks on their hands as to where they should hold the instrument and bow – never on the fingerboard though! (Ibid.).
Size of the first-year string class

Bornoff (Chan, 1998) was an early proponent of teaching string instruments in classes. Although the exact size of his classes is not mentioned, it is stated that Bornoff “…felt that if he could teach one student, then he might as well teach a whole class at one time, because the coverage was the same” (p. 67).

There are few references in the literature regarding the optimum size of the first-year string class. One study by Jackson (1980) sought “to determine if there are statistically significant differences in individual achievement within large and small beginning piano classes” (p. 162). She concluded that there was no statistically significant difference. However, she also cautions that, “these findings do not support results from recent studies in the area of general education that indicated that individual achievement increased as class size decreased” (p. 166). There have been no replications of this study.

In general, the literature reports a wide range of suggestions for class size. One author is adamant that class size should not exceed the number eight (Lamb, 1984). Others feel just as strongly that a class should not have less than eight students (Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978; Stoeving, 1921). Still others mention class size in a vague way. For example, Fink (1977) states that, “The class might be too large…” (p. 21), without specifying what too large means; and, Chapman (1970) advises that a class should be “small enough …to allow the teacher some personal contact with each child” (p. 6). Once again, what is small enough? And finally, there are those who say nothing about class size (Green, 1957; Trzcinski, 1963) although they go into great detail about a number of
other variables, including age of the beginning string student. This degree of variation regarding class size indicates disagreement and the need for further research.

**Frequency and length of first-year string class meetings**

The variables of frequency and length of string class meetings for first-year beginners are strongly interdependent. In 1991, MENC published the small manual, *Teaching Stringed Instruments: A Course of Study*, as a response to the growing need for music teachers to “design courses of study in the same manner as teachers in other disciplines” (p. vii). In it the authors address frequency and length together and suggest that, “For most effective results, beginning classes should meet two or three times a week, with a minimum of forty-five minutes per class” (p. 1). In Dillon & Kriechbaum (1978), the models they use show three beginning string classes a week for one-half hour each (pp. 10-12).

In a study that takes a look at beginning string programs, Doerksen & Delzell (2000) report that there is a discrepancy between what MENC recommends for contact time in beginning string classes in its publication *The Opportunity-to-Learn Standards*, and what schools typically offer. They suggest that, “…trends in grade starts and scheduling practices are not always apparent. What is apparent, though, is a degree of variability in the recommended and actual learning opportunities associated with beginning strings” (p. 62). Earlier they state that, “Longitudinal data about learning opportunities for beginning string programs is lacking” and conclude that, “Ongoing research about such opportunities may prove helpful for future recommendations offered
by leaders in the profession, as well as discussions about possible revisions to opportunity standards such as those published by MENC” (pp. 61-62).

Elizabeth Green (1966) in her book Teaching Stringed Instruments in Classes, posits that,

Daily classes during the first two or three weeks of instruction put the children and the program far ahead, both technically and chronologically. For the remainder of the first year, classes meeting twice a week are adequate. Home practice should be delayed until after the youngsters have set good hand positions, can draw straight bows, and play one or more tunes well by rote (pp. vii-viii).

Trzcinski (1963) goes a step further when he states, “The most desirable plan is to schedule the string program during school hours – 30 to 45 minutes daily – as a regular class” (p. 9).

Homogeneously and heterogeneously grouped classes

There are three ways of structuring a beginning string class: 1) homogeneously, with violin and viola taught together, and cello and bass in another class together, 2) homogeneously, with each instrument taught separately and, 3) heterogeneously, with all four instrument groups meeting at the same time. Klotman (1996) says “there is no real agreement on the merits of homogeneous versus heterogeneous string classes. In schools the choice is too often dictated by expediency and schedules” (p. 30). He goes on to describe the benefits and drawbacks of each and to give positive suggestions for each situation. Lamb (1984) also gives the pros and cons for both homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping, concluding that, “At the beginning stages of instruction homogeneous grouping is desirable…. As students achieve sufficient competence and maturity, heterogeneous grouping becomes not only feasible but desirable” (p. 143).

Trzcinski (1963) posits that, “Heterogeneous string class instruction should be considered
by the string teacher only if he is capable of coping with the varied and complex
problems presented by mixed groups” (p. 9).

Dillon & Kriechbaum, Jr. (1978, pp. 56-57) list six reasons they feel heterogeneous string classes are “the best way to develop a fine orchestra program:”

1) The students need to be in an orchestral situation (with all the family of stringed instruments) from the very beginning so that they realize immediately what an orchestra is.

2) The heterogeneous class helps them to realize immediately that all instruments are equally important to the orchestra.

3) If taught correctly, the students will find a mixed class more interesting and more fun than being in a like-instrument class.

4) A class of mixed instruments will sound much fuller and more mature at earlier stages because of the complete range of string sound.

5) The heterogeneous class, because it can be larger, is more efficient both financially and in use of the teacher’s time.

6) As soon as students progress to the point of being able to play harmonized parts, it will be easy to rehearse as an orchestra without causing schedule changes.

The Content in the Beginning String Class

String teachers are always looking for the perfect method book. Tatton (1994) supports this idea saying that, “Conscientious, successful teachers search for new and better materials. This is a natural and continuing process” (p. 65). He continues,

The basic method book selected to teach our curriculum is important and helps to provide the stability the students need. Most method books have their strength and are geared toward certain grade levels and philosophies. Selecting the book that coincides with our teaching situation will make the job easier.

In my opinion, a method book cannot include everything needed to teach a string class. Supplemental materials are needed. These should be carefully coordinated with the method book selected (p. 66).
Bornoff (1948) published his first string class method book in 1924. In it he avers that,

At the present time, training and development of strings are being seriously arrested because of the widespread utilization of methods that are obsolete, unnecessarily slow and contrary to progressive theories on speed and efficiency. No effort has been made to simplify teaching methods or to incorporate the psychological means by which learning and interest can be stimulated. String teachers are still bound by the prosaic ties of traditional pedagogy and the inveterate adherance (sic) to routine grind and repetition (p. 4).

Prior to the 1960s some of the most widely used string-class method books were C. Paul Herfurth’s *A Tune A Day* first published in 1927, Maia Bang’s *Violin Course*, 1931, Merle Isaac’s *String Class Method*, 1938, and *Building Technique with Beautiful Music* by Samuel Applebaum, 1956.

Also, George Bornoff, mentioned above, said his purpose for writing a book (Smith, 1986) was to “present a concrete and practical guide for developing basic skills in students that are fundamental requirements for rapid progress (p. 708). Bornoff’s method stands out because of the very fast pacing of his sequential studies. By the end of the first year the student was expected to be able to “play in any position on the fingerboard and should have attained considerable left-hand dexterity and bow control” (p. 709).

Then, in the 1960s new books appeared. Samuel Applebaum introduced his *String Builder* series and other supplementary volumes such as *Early Etudes for Strings* and *Orchestral Bowing Etudes*. Smith (1986) states:

Applebaum felt string players at all levels needed to be exposed to a variety of musical styles. ‘There has to be a systematic, sequential approach to composing for beginning and intermediate string players’…Educators should try to make students aware of the different qualities of sound that their instruments can produce right from the start, even during the early stages. (p. 703)
Frederick Muller and Harold Rusch gave the string world the *Muller-Rusch String Method* series in 1962. Also in 1962, John Kendall wrote *Listen and Play*. In 1966 *Growing with Strings* by Jack Pernecky was added to the list of available method books.

In 1970 Ralph Matesky and Ardelle Womack wrote and published *Learn to Play a Stringed Instrument*. In 1975 *Learning Unlimited String Program* by Thomas Wisniewski and John Higgins was published.


And finally, in the 2000s the ante has been raised once again. Two of the new method books now include an accompaniment CD in each book: a reworking of an earlier book, *Essential Elements 2000 for Strings* by Allen, Gillespie, and Tellejohn-Hayes was published in 2001; and, *Artistry in Strings* by Robert Frost and Gerald Fischbach, was released in 2002.

How different are each of these method books from each other? Choosing a particular one to use would be dependent on the teacher’s personal criteria and style. There is no doubt, however, that some of the series are more complete than others (e.g., the *Essential Elements* series [old and new] have many additional pages that may be copied to aid the instructor in administrative duties).
What skills should be taught in the first-year string class? It has been suggested that they should include: developing good skills in instrument position, body posture, bow hold, drawing the bow, proper left-hand position, proper placement of left-hand fingers for good intonation, developing listening skills, reading notes and rhythms correctly, and producing a good tone (Applebaum, 1986; Cook, 1957; Courvoisier, 1899; Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978; Green, 1966; Gruenberg, 1919; Juzek, 1948; Klotman, 1986; MENC, 1957; Mozart, 1756; Rolland, 1974; Stoeving, 1921; The Violin and How to Master It, 1883; Trzcinski, 1963).

**Literature of Research - String Instrument Instruction**

There is little research on the beginning string class. We know how many students there are and where they are and, through research, we are addressing specific topics regarding intonation, left-hand position, etc. (Hamann, 2000; Mishra, 2000; Weerts, 1992). But, in terms of what we teach, why we teach it, and the qualities of those who teach it, we have mostly scanty, anecdotal information. Therefore, research is needed to clarify, define, and define those elements that are foundational for the success of a first-year string class of K-8 students.

Among those who have conducted research that has a bearing on beginning string education in the last 10 years, though not germane to this study, are Michael Allen, Louis Bergonzi, Elaine Colprit, Robert Duke, John Geringer, Robert Gillespie, Thomas Goolsby, Donald Hamann, Jacqueline Henninger, Marilyn Kostka, Clifford Madsen, and Camille Smith. Some of the topics they have researched include: the effect of pullout on students; rote vs. note; rhythm learning and retention; prediction of music achievement;
tonal pattern effects on aural perception, reading recognition, and melodic sight-reading; effect of colored rhythmic notation on music reading skills; praise and corrective feedback in the remediation of incorrect left-hand positions; a comparison of syllabic methods for improving rhythm literacy; development of performance pitch accuracy of string students; music reading; development of aural and instrumental performance skills; interrelationships among music aptitude, IQ, and auditory conservation; observation and analysis of Suzuki string teaching; teacher and student behavior in Suzuki string lessons; and, the effect of group size on individual achievement.

Kantorski (1995) and Nelson (1983) provide a review of research topics in string teaching in the period before the current era. Their findings show that string teaching is one of the least researched areas of music education and that there has been a decline in the number of string education dissertations since the 1980’s. The purpose of this study is to address this dearth of information by contributing to the body of knowledge in string education.

**Literature on the Delphi Technique**

Since the Delphi Technique used for collecting data in this study has not been used in the field of music before, it is helpful to review the literature that has been written about it in other disciplines, including its background, description, and application to this study.

**Background**

The Delphi Technique has been in use for 50 years. It is a process, developed by Norman Dalkey and his associates at Rand Corporation beginning in 1948, to be “used in planning settings to achieve a number of objectives:
1) To determine or develop a range of possible program alternatives.

2) To explore or expose underlying assumptions or information leading to different judgments.

3) To seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group.

4) To correlate informed judgments on a topic spanning a wide range of disciplines.

5) To educate the respondent group as to the diverse and interrelated aspects of the topic” (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

In 1953, the Rand Corporation, at the behest of the United States Air Force, endeavored to find a way to quickly and efficiently “obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts…by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback” (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, pp. 10-11). However, this event was classified SECRET and was not published until 1962 (Lindeman, 1981, p. 2).

The name Delphi was selected because of its reference to the Greek Delphic oracles – the deities of wise, if ambiguous, pronouncements regarding future events. Although some decry this reference, the name has remained and does lend itself, at least to some degree, to the quality of looking to the future – foresight – that this technique addresses (Dalkey et al, 1972; Adler & Ziglio, 1996).

Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson (1975) describe the Delphi Technique as, “a method for the systematic solicitation and collation of judgments on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarized information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses” (p. 10).
During the half century of its existence, the Delphi Technique has gradually expanded to countries throughout the world, most prominently to Germany and Japan, and has slowly entered a wider range of disciplines. Today the Delphi Technique is employed in the fields of industry, social sciences, science and technology, education, information and communication, and others.

**Delphi Technique as a Tool for Descriptive and Qualitative Research**

So what is this Delphi Technique? And, what makes it useful? Why was it selected as the research tool for this study?

The Delphi Technique – What is it?

The basic descriptive premise for the Delphi Technique or Method is the old adage, “two heads are better than one.” Some have likened the process as decision-making by committee. Lindeman (1981) gives a more enlightening description:

The Delphi Technique is a method of soliciting and combining the opinions of a group of experts. It involves the use of a series of questionnaires designed to produce group consensus and eliminate face-to-face confrontation as experienced on panels or committees. It also attempts, in a rapid and relatively efficient way, to combine the knowledge and abilities of a diverse group of experts in quantifying variables that are either intangible or vague (p. 2)

Ziglio (Adler & Ziglio, 1996) suggests another definition that provides further understanding of the nature of the Delphi Technique:

The objective of most Delphi applications is the reliable and creative exploration of ideas or the production of suitable information for decision-making. The Delphi Method is based on a structured process for collecting and distilling knowledge from a group of experts by means of a series of questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback (p. 3).

And finally, to further refine the aspect of decision-making in this method, Delbecq (1975) observes that the expert panelists must abide
...the lack of agreement or incomplete state of knowledge concerning either the nature of the problem or the components which must be included in a successful solution. As a result, heterogeneous group members must pool their judgments to invent or discover a satisfactory course of action (p. 5).

**Usefulness**

Sam Sheele (Linstone & Turoff, 1975) lists a number of bases for the usefulness of the Delphi Technique. The one that is particularly applicable to this study states, “...one important product of each Delphi panel is the reality that is defined through its interaction” (p. 37). The reality that is defined in the present study was made evident in the number of areas of consensus and in the considered opinions of dissenters.

Ziglio (ibid.) adds that,

- The Delphi Technique attempts to draw on a wide reservoir of knowledge, experience and expertise in a systematic manner instead of relying on *ad hoc* communications with selected individuals.
- The Delphi Method should be used when the primary source of information sought is informed judgement...where existing information on the magnitude of the problem is not available or is too costly to provide.
- There are many instances in social policy and public health where decisions would require knowledge, which is not readily available. In these situations decision-makers must rely on the opinion of experts. A challenge for decision-makers is how to secure such expert opinion, and how to reconcile different opinions about the subject matter. Delphi processes are one way of meeting this challenge.
- A Delphi exercise, properly managed, can be a highly motivating task for respondent experts.
- Anonymity in carrying out the Delphi exercise and a number of measures can be adopted to improve group response and to allow a sharing of responsibility that can be refreshing and release respondents from inhibitions (pp. 21-22).
There have been detractors. Linstone (1975) quotes from the Sackman Report of 1974 that, “The future is far too important for the human species to be left to fortune tellers using new versions of old crystal balls. It is time for the oracle to move out and science to move in” (p. 573). By way of defense, Linstone continues that, “Poorly executed applications are brought forth to censure the entire method, quotations are taken out of context, the basis for criticism is left vague, significant supportive research and new directions are ignored, and irrelevant “standards” are applied” (ibid.). Other concerns are addressed below.

Reliability

Dalkey (1972) asserts that, “For the analyst using expert opinion within a study, reliability can be considered to play somewhat the same role as reproducibility in experimental investigations. It is clearly desirable for a study that another analyst using the same approach (and different experts) arrive at similar results” (p. 18). In an earlier, 1969, publication reported in Hughes (1993), Dalkey adds to the above:

In general, one would expect in the area of opinion, group responses would be more reliable than individual opinions, in the simple sense that two groups (of equally competent experts) would be more likely to evidence similar answers to a set of related questions than would two individuals. This “similarity” can be measured by the correlation between the answers of the two groups over a set of questions (p. 10-12).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Delphi Technique

Delbecq (ibid.) has addressed some of the concerns with the Delphi Technique by reviewing nine characteristics of group processes (p.19) that can have positive or negative results depending on the group method that is utilized. This review will address
five of their suggested characteristics that I feel are the most pertinent to the modified Delphi method used in this study. They are:

- Role orientation of groups – the tendency for groups to direct attention toward social roles (e.g., friendship acts or congeniality) or task-oriented roles (e.g., idea giving or judgment sharing).

- Normative behavior – the felt freedom to express ideas in discussions, and the level of conforming behavior in a process.

- Equality of participation – the number of individuals in the group who contribute to search, evaluation, and choice of a group’s product or output.

- Group composition and size – the homogeneity or heterogeneity of personnel in a group, as well as the number of individuals involved in the decision-making process.

- Utilization of resources – the time, cost, and effort involved for administrators and participants in each process.

Delbecq also provides insightful reasoning regarding how well the Delphi Technique fares with the potential weaknesses of the above characteristics.

1) With the first characteristic, role orientation, Delbecq (ibid.) states that the Delphi method works well: “Since group members do not meet face to face in the Delphi Technique, there is a complete absence of social-emotional behavior, and all attention focuses on task-instrumental activities (p. 21).

2) Delbecq feels that the Delphi Technique overcomes possible problems inherent with the second characteristic, normative behavior, because “the Delphi process minimizes conforming influences because face-to-face discussion is eliminated and respondents are anonymous to one another” (p. 25).

3) Equality of participation is similar to normative behavior. He suggests that, To the extent that decision making is dominated by a few high-status, expressive, or strong individuals, there will be a lower felt freedom for open
discussion and a reduction in the quality of decision making…Because there is no face-to-face contact among respondents in the Delphi process, there is no opportunity for a few strong individuals to dominate the group’s output” (pp. 25-26).

It was this characteristic of perceived equality that I felt was most important to this study since I wished to have a panel consisting of nationally-known pedagogues and regionally-known practitioners. In light of research showing that school practitioners tend to be intimidated by university professors (Gitlin, 1992), the Delphi Technique was particularly appealing.

4) The Delphi Technique positively addresses the characteristic of group size and composition since “the number of participants is generally determined by the number of respondents required to constitute a representative pooling of judgments for each target group and by the information-processing capability of the design and monitoring team” (p. 26).

5) The characteristic, utilization of resources, presents both strengths and weaknesses for the Delphi method. The resources include time, effort, and cost. There are two different considerations to make: 1) the administrator, and 2) the panelists.

Time can be a daunting problem for the administrator since the Delphi process requires a relatively large number of hours, initially, to prepare the overall design of the survey. The amount of time needed to synthesize the responses and create the next two rounds can also be considerable, depending on the size and nature of the survey. And, it only takes one or two panelists to delay completing their responses, to cause considerable waste of administrative time.
In terms of cost, there is relatively little cost for the administrator if the survey is presented on line through a web-based program. However, when surveys need to be mailed, the costs do rise. In the Delphi method, whether mailed or done online, the participant faces no costs in terms of money. Also for the participant, Delbecq suggests that, “The Delphi process also saved participants the additional time and cost of having to attend face-to-face meetings” (p. 29).

Application of the Delphi Technique to this Research

Linstone & Turoff (1975) list seven reasons why one might choose the Delphi Technique as the best means to collect data. They state that, Usually, one or more of the following properties of the application leads to the need for employing Delphi:

- The problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis
- The individuals needed to contribute to the examination of a broad or complex problem have no history of adequate communication and may represent diverse backgrounds with respect to experience or expertise
- More individuals are needed than can effectively interact in a face-to-face exchange
- Time and cost make frequent group meetings unfeasible
- The efficiency of face-to-face meetings can be increased by a supplemental group communication process
- Disagreements among individuals are so severe or politically unpalatable that the communication process must be refereed and/or anonymity assured
- The heterogeneity of the participants must be preserved to assure validity of the results, i.e., avoidance of domination by quantity or by strength of personality (“bandwagon effect”)
The application of the Delphi Technique to this research was based on all of the seven properties listed above. The contributions of those surveyed were paramount to the intent of this study; the primary rationale is that the data collected serve as an underlying foundation for future research.
CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

Introduction

A three-round, modified Delphi Technique survey was used to collect the data for this study. Previous to my decision to use this method, I had administered a pilot survey to 33 string teachers at the Midwest String Conference Workshop held at The Ohio State University in July 2003. Teachers from all over the United States and from several foreign countries attended the conference. The results of this pilot survey - the demographics of teachers of first-year students and first-year string students, the curriculum structure of first-year string programs, and the content and organization of first-year string programs - provided some of the basis for the questions/statements used in Round 1 of this modified Delphi Technique survey.

This chapter discusses the following steps of the modified Delphi Technique research process: 1) panel selection process, 2) Round 1 survey instrument development and data collecting procedures, 3) Round 2 survey instrument development and data collecting procedures, and 4) Round 3 survey instrument development and data collecting procedures.
Expert Panel Member Selection Process

Selection of the panel of experts was the first step in preparing the survey. It was determined that the survey panel should be representative of professional educators involved in different areas of string education. Therefore, I decided to include a combination of pedagogues, classroom practitioners, administrators, and performer/studio teachers interested in the teaching of elementary-age, first-year string students.

It was also determined, after reading the literature about the Delphi Technique and speaking with local experts of the Delphi Technique, that a panel consisting of 20 – 30 members would be the most suitable size for this study. At the onset of the survey there were 22 participants. By the end of the administering of Round 2 there were 20 panel members (see Appendix A). For consistency, the responses of the two panelists who did not complete all three rounds of the survey were eliminated.

The original list of pedagogues under consideration for inclusion on the expert panel consisted of 15 nationally known pedagogues who had published frequently about string teaching in refereed journals. Selection for this group of panelists was based on 1) their knowledge of and experience in first-year string teaching, 2) published research, and 3) experience in teaching and/or lecturing on the subject. Finally, an invitation (see Appendix B) was sent to each one, with the hope that at least ten would respond positively to the request. Ten did respond affirmatively; however, during the course of Round 1 one of the panelists needed to drop out because of a family member’s critical illness.

At the same time that expert pedagogues were being solicited, 33 state music supervisors were contacted (see Appendix C), from a list provided by Music Educators
National Conference (MENC), asking them to nominate one or two expert practitioners of first-year string classes in their state (see Appendix D). The Music Supervisors were asked to base their nomination of teachers to the panel on the following criterion: a first-year string teacher’s proven track record of excellence as judged by their administrators, peers, and community. One third of those who were sent nomination forms responded and 15 practitioners were extended an invitation (see Appendix E) to participate on the panel. Ten practitioners agreed to serve on the panel. The seven states represented on the panel by the practitioners were Alabama, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New York (2), Ohio (2), Texas, and West Virginia.

Two studio teachers/performers, with a keen interest in the education of beginning string students, were also asked to serve on the panel. The criteria used in this area of expertise, for selection to the panel, were similar to those of the practitioners with the following addition: public recognition as evidenced by commercially sold recordings and/or frequent public performances. Two enthusiastically agreed to participate. And finally, one administrator, with more than 40 years of experience at the helm of a large and successful orchestra program, agreed to participate.

The expert panel consisted of the following balance of professional branches in string education: nine educators, ten practitioners, two professional studio teachers/performers, and one administrator. These panelists were then sent instructions on how to take the survey (see Appendix F).

All panelists understood, from the beginning, that they would remain anonymous to each other throughout the three survey rounds. They also knew that, although their responses would be published, confidentiality would be maintained. At the end of Round
3, each panelist was asked if he/she would permit me to list their name as a survey participant, with the promise that the participant names and their specific responses would remain confidential to me. All participants (100%), at the end of Round 3, agreed to let me list their names in my study.

Pilot Study Panel

Five local string teachers were invited to participate in taking the pilot survey. Four agreed to take the pilot survey and were sent instructions (see Appendix G). They were also invited to give comments about the survey’s scope, practicality, clearness, and the degree of ease in completing the survey form.

Validity Panel Selection

A panel was needed to check the face and content validity of the instruments constructed for each of the three rounds of the survey. E-mail was sent to three members of The Ohio State University string faculty, asking for their assistance. All three agreed to serve in this capacity. A fourth person, the manager of the web-based survey program, Zoomerang, that was used for this survey, was asked, verbally, to comment on all rounds of the survey since he had experience with the technical aspects of the survey program and with the Delphi Technique (see Appendix H).

Round 1

Introduction

Preparation for the Round 1 instrument began in October 2003. It was imperative for preparation to begin at this time since Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for exemption was necessary before commencing, and a copy of the Round 1 instrument was
needed as part of the IRB application. Subsequently, the IRB approved the application for exemption.

Survey Instrument Development

In the string research literature on first-year string classes, the variable characteristics of a first-year string class, such as age of the beginner, size of class, frequency of class meetings, length of class meetings, and whether the class should be grouped heterogeneously or homogeneously, are frequently discussed. However, upon analysis it is apparent that those in the field of string education disagree about the content of each topic. I found this to be true, also, when I administered the exploratory survey to 33 string practitioners who were convened for the Midwest String Conference Workshop held at The Ohio State University in the summer of 2003, referenced earlier. For example, there are those who would argue that 2-3 class meetings a week are sufficient (Green, 1966; Teaching Stringed Instruments, 1991) and others who state that the optimum number of class meetings per week is 3-5 (Dillon & Kriechbaum, 1978; Trzcinski, 1963).

These variables were the basis for selection of many of the questions/statements that were used in the development of the Round 1 survey instrument since they were often mentioned as components of a string class.

The first-year string class skills most mentioned in string literature, and also by the pilot survey given in the summer of 2003, were: body and instrument position, bow hold and bow stroke, good tone, and left-hand shape and position. Therefore, questions/statements regarding the development of these skills were used in the development of the Round 1 survey instrument.
The purpose of the survey was to find out if a representative body of today’s string education experts agrees on which components and skills are foundational for the success of a first-year string class. It was felt that the modified Delphi Technique was the best tool to serve this purpose, primarily because of its features of anonymity, ease of administration, and low cost.

The Round 1 instrument was designed to give as much latitude as possible to the panelists, regarding their ability to make decisions as to which components and skills should be included as foundational to the success of the first-year string class, while, at the same time, attempting to keep the parameters clear and structured.

The Round 1 survey contained ten sections: 1) general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the status of first-year string education in the U.S. today, 2) teaching location, 3) ideal student age of beginning string students, 4) group and individual lessons, 5) class size, 6) length of class time, 7) homogeneous or Heterogeneous grouping, 8) methods and/or method books, 9) performances, and 10) miscellaneous (e.g., general questions on improvisation and overall focus of the first-year string classroom). It was stressed to the panel members that the focus in this survey was restricted to the first-year string class in a K-8 setting.

The Round 1 survey that had been submitted with the IRB application was launched to the pilot panel members. In January 2004, the revised version of the Round 1 instrument, based on the comments made by pilot survey members, was launched to the validity panel members. When the validity panel members had completed the survey, their responses were reviewed.
The Round 1 instrument was constructed on a web-based survey program called Zoomerang. This program allows for the researcher to choose from a number of survey designs. For Round 1, I chose to use the following three modes of response: Yes/No, Open-ended Comments Box, and a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by Not Suitable and Most Suitable. The terms Suitable and its variations, were selected because it seemed, at the time, that these would more consistently serve the wide variety of questions/statements included in the survey.

When the Round 1 survey had been completed, it was launched to the panel of experts from the Zoomerang site, complete with greeting/instructions at the beginning of the survey and a thank you at the end (see Appendixes I and J). There were 59 items on the Round 1 survey. There were 40 questions/statements in Round 1 for which consensus was sought.

Data Collecting Procedures

Initially, three members of the panel requested that I send them hard copies of the survey by postal mail because of difficulties with using the Internet. After the survey was launched, another panelist, who had difficulties receiving the survey, also requested to have the survey sent in hard-copy form. These four panelists received additional instructions (see Appendix K) on how to complete the survey as well as a copy of the instructions sent to the web-based users. These panelists were sent 1) an instruction sheet, 2) the Round 1 survey, and 3) a return stamped envelope.

After Round 1 was launched, each panel member, who was sent the survey by Internet, was contacted by e-mail to confirm that he/she had received it. Four of the panel members experienced technical problems with reception of the survey: one panelist was
not able to access the survey; the other three claimed that they didn’t receive it. In the first instance, the survey was sent again and the panelist was able to access it. With the other three, their computers had identified the survey as SPAM. However, all three were able to retrieve the survey when they were instructed what to look for. It took several days to work out these problems. By mid-February, all Round 1 surveys had been completed and returned.

**Round 2**

**Survey Instrument Development**

Since the Delphi Technique is based on multiple rounds, simulating “structured conversation” (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 3), Round 2 was a refinement of Round 1. The nine questions/statements on which the panelists reached consensus were not included in Round 2 because the Delphi Technique objective of reaching consensus had been met. After reading the written responses from the panelists in Round 1, I changed the form of some of the questions/statements in a further attempt to determine if consensus could be reached. For example, in Round 1 a few panelists argued that they didn’t feel comfortable selecting only one answer, for the variables of age, class size, class frequency, class length, and class grouping, because each variable was dependent on the others. So in Round 2, I asked them to create the ideal first-year string class for themselves: that, while keeping in mind that each variable would be dependent on others, they were to choose their own personal, ideal combination of these variables.

Round 2 contained 13 sections: 1) general satisfaction with the way first-year string players are taught in the U.S. today, 2) general dissatisfaction with the way first-
year string players are taught in the U.S. today, 3) teaching location, 4) variables (age, class size, frequency of class meetings, length of class time, and homogeneous and heterogeneous class grouping), 5) method books, 6) performances, 7) miscellaneous skills, 8) general music as a foundation for first-year string classes, 9) overall focus in the first-year string instrument classroom, 10) components for success in the first-year string classroom, 11) attributes of the ideal teacher of first-year string classes, 12) pace of first-year string classes and, 13) the most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes.

The modes of response given to the panelists were: Yes/No, a scale using Less Suitable and More Suitable, a scale using Less Suitable, Suitable and More Suitable, a 4-point Likert-type scale anchored by Less Suitable and Most Suitable, and four sets of statements requiring ranking. For Round 2, I used statements instead of questions, in the section about variables, to see if this would yield more consensus among the panelists.

Throughout the survey, panelists were given the opportunity to give additional comments. There were 75 items in Round 2, including open-ended questions, asking for panelists’ opinions. There were 63 questions/statements for which consensus was sought.

**Data Collecting Procedures**

Construction of Round 2 began in February. However, major technical problems were encountered with the survey program and panelists were notified that there would be a delay in sending out Round 2. These problems occurred because upgrades to the survey program, installed nationally during this period, negatively affected the construction of my Round 2 survey.
After Round 2 was completed, it was distributed to validity panel members and dissertation committee members for comment and corrections, based on validity panel suggestions. Corrections to the Round 2 survey were made. The Round 2 (hard copy) survey was sent to four panelists in early March. Included in this mailing were a copy of the responses from Round 1, the Round 2 survey, and a stamped return envelope. The survey was launched to the panelists via Internet, complete with a greeting and a thank you (see Appendixes L and M). The last Round 2 survey was received in the third week of March.

Round 3

Survey Instrument Development

Again, since the Delphi Technique is based on iteration, Round 3 contained some of the same questions/statements that appeared in Rounds 1 and 2. However, as in the preparation of Round 2, some of the questions/statements were changed or tempered, based on panelists’ responses and their additional comments in the previous round. This was done as a final attempt to determine if consensus could be reached on these items. For example, in Round 1 panelists were given a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored by Not Suitable and Most Suitable, to indicate their ideal class size. Consensus was not reached on this item. So, in Round 2 the range was narrowed to three points (Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable) to determine if consensus could be reached. Again, consensus was not reached. In Round 3, based on the panelists’ written responses, I transformed the item about class size into a question that asked whether class size should be based on teacher preference and/or expertise; in this form consensus was reached. In another example, I asked for each panelist’s definition of rote teaching and ear training,
since these terms seemed to be used interchangeably and inconsistently in the Round 2 survey.

Round 3 contained four sections: 1) general perception of the way first-year string players are taught in the U.S. today, 2) miscellaneous, 3) components and attributes of the successful first-year string class, and 4) personal information.

The second section contained eight items that asked the panelists for their: 1) definitions of concepts 2) suggestions, and 3) opinions. The mode used was open-ended response. This section included questions/statements regarding the following topics: general perception of the status of string instruction in the U.S. today, rote teaching, ear training, recruiting, quality of instruction, and pacing.

The last section of Round 3 included nine questions/statements that requested personal information that was used to categorize responses and to present profiles of the expert panelists to the readers. There were 35 items in Round 3 of which 11 questions/statements were designed to determine if consensus could be reached.

**Data Collecting Procedures**

For Round 3, I decided that, since the panelists had not reached consensus on certain questions/statements from Round 1 and Round 2, consensus most likely would not be reached on these items in Round 3. Therefore, I changed the design mode to open-ended response so that I could attempt to find out why each panelist felt the way he/she did about these subjects.

Only one validity committee member was available to review the proposed Round 3. After making the changes suggested by this reviewer, Round 3 was both launched and
sent via mail, complete with greeting and thank you (see Appendixes N and O). Those panelists who were sent the survey by mail received a copy of Round 2 comments, a Round 3 survey, and a return stamped envelope. The final completed Round 3 survey was received in early April.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of using the Delphi Technique for this survey was to engage expert panelists in a structured dialog regarding the components and skills needed to provide an ideal first-year string classroom. The first-year string classroom is defined, in this study, as a class for young children, in an elementary school setting, who have not had previous experience with a string instrument. An attempt to determine if there was consensus on specific issues was the primary goal, in order to establish agreed-upon components and skills deemed essential for a successful first-year string class.

For this study, the problem investigated was: What specific components and skills do today’s experts agree are foundational for a successful, first-year string-instrument classroom?

Expert Panel Demographic Data

The expert panel consisted of 20 male and female string specialists from different areas of the country. Serving on the panel were eight pedagogues, nine public school practitioners, two studio teachers/performers, and one administrator. The same 20 members of this panel were present throughout all three rounds of the survey. The
characteristics of the panel members regarding the variables of age range, gender, highest
degree held, and the number of years teaching a first-year string class, are listed below.

## Panelist Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Number of Years Teaching a First-Year String Class</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00-03 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>04-08 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>09-14 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 +</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15+ years</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>MA/MM</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ph.D</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Round 1 Survey Procedures

The twenty panelists were sent (electronically and by hardcopy) the Round 1
survey, with instructions, in early February. The survey questions/statements and the
responses are presented in their entirety in Appendix X. Each panelist’s response is listed
below each question and the same number is assigned to a particular panelist throughout
Round 1 so that the reader may get a sense of each panelist.

All panelists were instructed to explain any negative response given so that the
other panelists could understand their reasoning. Each panelist was expected to read the
responses of the other panelists at the end of each round, and to take these responses into consideration when completing the next survey round.

**Round 1 Survey Instrument Numerical Results**

In this section, only the quantifiable responses will be presented. The written responses can be found in the appendix section (see Appendix P).

**Question 1:** From your perspective, are you satisfied, IN GENERAL, with the way first-year string classes for young people are taught in the United States?

![Bar Chart]

- **Yes:** 45%
- **Q/S1:** 55%

**Statement 4:** Classes held in PUBLIC SCHOOLS and PRIVATE SCHOOLS (Not suitable, Less suitable, Suitable, More suitable, Most suitable)

![Bar Chart]

- **Suitable:** 45%
- **More Suitable:** 10%
- **Most Suitable:** 45%

**Statement 5:** Classes held in COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (not related to public or private schools)

![Bar Chart]

- **Less Suitable:** 5%
- **Suitable:** 65%
- **More Suitable:** 30%
Statement 6: Classes held in MUSIC CONSERVATORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Less Suitable</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
<th>More Suitable</th>
<th>Most Suitable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement 7: Classes held in COMMERCIAL MUSIC HOUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Not Suitable</th>
<th>Less Suitable</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
<th>More Suitable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement 8: Additional comments or suggestions regarding statements 4-7

What age do you feel is ideal for students to begin string-instrument instruction in the classroom setting?

Statement 9: Age 3-5 (Preschool)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Not Suitable</th>
<th>Less Suitable</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
<th>Most Suitable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement 10: Age 6-7 (1st-2nd Grade)

15% 45% 15% 10% 15%

Statement 11: Age 8-9 (3rd-4th Grade)

35% 15% 50%

Statement 12: Age 10-11 (5th-6th Grade)

20% 20% 20% 40%

Statement 13: Age 12-13 (7th-8th Grade)

5% 40% 35% 15% 5%

Statement 14: Comments or additional suggestions
What works best: group, individual, or a combination of lesson types?

Statement 15: The string class meets 2-3 times a week, AND each student gets one 15-minute lesson.

Statement 16: The string class meets 4-5 times a week, no individual lessons given.

Statement 17: All string students start with individual (private) lessons only

Statement 18: Comments or additional suggestion

CLASS SIZE

What is the ideal size for the beginning string class?
Statement 19: 10-15 students

5.5% 5/5% 16% 5% 68%

Statement 20: 15-20 students

10.5% 10.5% 48% 16% 16%

Statement 21: 20-25 students

26% 47% 11% 5.5% 5.5%

Statement 22: 25-30 students

63% 21% 11% 5%
Statement 23: 30+ students

LENGTH OF CLASS TIME

What is the ideal amount of time for the first-year string class?

Statement 25: 30 minutes

Statement 26: 45 minutes
Statement 27: 60 minutes

Statement 28: Comments or additional suggestions

**HOMOGENOUS AND/OR HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES**

Which is preferable? The separate teaching of like instruments: 1) violin/viola in a class and cello/bass in another class (homogeneous grouping), OR 2) the combining of violin, viola, cello, and bass in one class (heterogeneous grouping)?

Statement 29: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously (a violin/viola class, and a separate cello/bass class.

Statement 30: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously, with bass being taught separately from cello.
Statement 31: The first-year string class should be grouped heterogeneously (violin, viola, cello, bass together in the same class).

Statement 32: First-year string classes should be grouped heterogeneously with violin, viola, and cello, only, in the class. Bass should be taught separately (and perhaps at a later age.)

Statement 33: The first-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously for the first 2-4 months and then subsequently it should be grouped heterogeneously for each class meeting.

Statement 34: The first-year string class should meet 1-3 times homogeneously and 1 time heterogeneously (for an ensemble experience) in the same week.
Statement 35: Additional comments or suggestions.

METHODS AND/OR METHOD BOOKS

Is it necessary for the teacher to have his/her very own method? What is best for the ideal first-year string class: one’s own method which is more or less reflected in a particular method book; one’s own method in which a variety of method books are used; or, lacking one’s own method, adoption of a method which appears to be successful, at least commercially?

Statement 36: Use one commercial method book series, only, in the first-year string classroom.

Statement 37: Do not use any commercial method book in the first-year string classroom: use teacher-prepared/collection material, only.

Statement 38: Use a combination of method books in the first-year string classroom.
Statement 39: Additional comments or suggestions.

PERFORMANCES

How many performances should occur in the ideal first-year string class? At what point should the first performance occur? What should the first public performance consist of in terms of content?

Statement 40: There should be not public performances for the first-year string class.

Statement 41: There should be one public performance for the first-year string class.

Statement 42: There should be two or more performances for the first-year string class.
Statement 43: The first public performance should occur within the first 3-5 months of the beginning of instruction.

Statement 44: The first public performance should occur after 6-9 months of instruction.

Statement 45: The first public performance of a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, and beautiful tone on open strings.

Statement 46: The first public performance of a beginning string class should consist of simple tunes.
Statement 47: Comments and additional suggestions.

Question 48: Should first-year string students be required to have 1-2 years of general music that includes the teaching of aural skills, rhythm, and note reading preparation before learning to play a string instrument? If so, who should instigate a concerted effort to lobby for creating strong general music classes in all schools? Or, should this preparation be the responsibility of the teacher of first-year string players?

Question 49: Should improvisation be an integral part of the first-year string class?

![Graph showing 70% Yes and 30% No for Question 49]

Question 50: What technical issues, such as 1) use of 4th finger, 2) number/which strings should be introduced the first year, 3) introduction of positions AND/OR position changes for violin and viola, and 4) introduction of cello extensions, should merit further discussion and consideration?

Question 51: What should be the overall focus in the first-year string classroom?

Question 52: What do you feel are the most important components for success in the first-year string class?

Question 53: What should determine the pace of a first-year string class? What minimum technical and musical skills should most of the students have mastered by the end of the first year?

Question 54: Indicate the most important attributes of the ideal teacher of first-year strings.

Question 55: Should there be minimum standards/requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string classes?
Question 56: Even with a shortage of string teachers in the U.S., should teachers whose primary instrument is not a string instrument be hired to teach first-year string players?

74% 26%

Question 57: What do you feel are the most important steps that should be taken to improve first-year string classes?

Question 58: Changes over time: who should be responsible for change, if necessary, in the teaching of first-year strings? The university level? ASTA? The teachers in the schools? All of the above?

Question 59: And finally, please identify other areas of concern/questions that you feel should be included in this survey.

**Round 1 Summary of Results**

**Consensus Questions and Statements**

In Round 1, the following nine questions/statements (of 42) yielded consensus (21%):

**Q/S 05:** Classes held in Community Schools (not related to public or private schools).

Consensus \((N = 19)\) in the Suitable-More Suitable range

**Q/S 07:** Classes held in Commercial Music Houses.

Consensus \((N = 18)\) in the Suitable-Less Suitable range

**Q/S 09:** Age 3-5 (Preschool).

Consensus \((N = 17)\) in the Less Suitable-Not Suitable range.
**Q/S 15**: The string class meets 2-3 times a week, AND each student gets one 15-minute individual lesson per week.

Consensus \((N = 17)\) in the More Suitable-Most Suitable range.

**Q/S 22**: 25-30 students.

Consensus \((N = 17)\) in the Less Suitable-Not Suitable range.

**Q/S 23**: 30+ students.

Consensus \((N = 19)\) in the Less Suitable-Not Suitable range.

**Q/S 26**: 45 minutes.

Consensus \((N = 17)\) in the Most Suitable-More Suitable range.

**Q/S 40**: There should be no public performance for the first-year string class.

Consensus \((N = 20)\) in the Less Suitable-Not Suitable range.

**Q/S 55**: Should there be minimum standards/requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string classes?

Consensus \((N = 19)\) for a Yes response.

**Question/Statement 11** is in a special category. Consensus was not reached. However, this age group received the highest contiguous agreement among the panelists.

Agreement \((N = 20)\) in the Most Suitable-More Suitable-Suitable range.

**Non-Consensus Questions and Statements**

The 30 questions listed below did not yield consensus:

Questions/Statements 1, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 55, and 56.

The topics of these questions/statements that did not yield consensus include, for example, the weaknesses and strengths of first-year string teaching in our country today,
some of the specific variables of age, class size, class length and frequency, use of method books, and various details regarding the first public performance of a first-year string class. For further detail see Appendix O. These non-consensus questions/statements served as the basis for Round 2.

**Round 2 Survey Procedures**

Following the administration of Round 1, each panelist had access to the responses of all the other panelists for all 59 Questions/Statements/Additional Comments. Those panelists who were doing the survey by Internet were able to access the responses on the Zoomerang website. Those who were doing the survey by hardcopy were sent hardcopy responses. The authors of all responses remained anonymous. The panelists were asked to review the responses in preparation for the Round 2 survey. All panelists were instructed to explain any negative responses in Round 2.

The Round 2 survey was a newly constructed survey tool. In preparation for Round 2 and per the Delphi Technique, I reviewed all Round 1 responses and attempted to reconstruct those questions/statements that had not yielded consensus in Round 1. The first change involved taking some of Round 1 questions/statements and breaking them down into smaller units in a further attempt to determine if consensus could be reached. For example, Question/Statement 1, in Round 1, did not yield consensus. The comments for this Q/S were reviewed and became the basis for Questions/Statements 1-8 in Round 2. The second change involved rephrasing questions into statements to determine if consensus could be reached. This resulted in Questions/Statements 9-17 in Round 2. For a third change, I included rank ordering on Questions/Statements 68, 70, 72, and 75 in Round 2. Of the 30 questions/statements that did not yield consensus in Round 1, four
were excluded from use in subsequent rounds because of comments and suggestions that
the panelists made. Those excluded were:

**Q/S 17:** All string students start with individual (private) lessons only. The responses
were spread throughout the Not Suitable-Most Suitable range.

**Q/S 31:** The first-year string class should be grouped heterogeneously (violin, viola,
cello, bass together in the same class). The responses, with the exception of one, were
spread between the Not Suitable-Suitable ranges, with nine in the Not Suitable-Less
Suitable range.

**Q/S 32:** First-year string classes should be grouped heterogeneously with violin, viola
and cello, only, in the class. Bass should be taught separately (and perhaps at a later age).
The responses were spread throughout the Not Suitable-Most Suitable range, with most
(n=11) in the Less Suitable-Not Suitable range.

**Q/S 37:** Do not use any commercial method book in the first-year string classroom: use
teacher-prepared/collection material, only. The responses were spread throughout the
Most Suitable-Not Suitable range, with most (n=15) being in the Suitable-Not Suitable
range.

There were 76 items (Questions/Statements/Additional Comments) in the Round
2 survey with 59 Questions/Statements. The twenty panelists were sent (electronically
and by hardcopy) the Round 2 survey, with instructions, in early March. All surveys had
been returned by March 22, 2004. The survey questions/statements and responses of
Round 2 are reported below.
Round 2 Survey Instrument Numerical Results

In this section, only the quantifiable responses will be presented. The written responses can found in the appendix section (see Appendix Q).

Section 1: GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRING PLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY. Please respond YES or NO to each of the statements 1-8 below. If you respond “NO” to any statement, please state your reason(s).

Statement 1: There are many dedicated, excellent teachers in the U.S. today.
Yes, No

95% 5%

Statement 2: There is more and higher quality material, including real teaching pieces (rather than transcriptions), in the U.S. today. Yes, No

YES, 100%

Statement 3: There are excellent first-year string method books available in the U.S. today. Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 4: There are a growing number of string students (growing interest in string instruments) in the U.S. today. Yes, No

Yes, 100%
Statement 5: There is more opportunity, in general, for taking first-year string classes in the U.S. today.

89% 11%

Statement 6: There is more rote teaching (ear training) than before in the U.S. today. Yes, No

94% 6%

Statement 7: There are better recruiting efforts being made for first-year string players in the U.S. today. Yes, No

80% 20%

Statement 8: Research into the psychology of teaching has greatly improved the overall level of teaching in the U.S. today. Yes, No

79% 21%
Section II: GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRING PLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY.

Statement 9: There are too many first-year string students who are NOT taught by string specialist OR who are taught by a weak, rather than strong, non-string player in the U.S. today. Yes, No

74% 26%

Statement 10: There are too many teachers who are lacking a methodology (ergo, not all basics are being taught) in their teaching of first-year string players in the U.S. today. Yes, No

85% 15%

Statement 11: There is too much stress on WHAT to play, rather than HOW to play an instrument, in too many first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

84% 16%
Statement 12: Teaching is often hurried because too often there is not enough time allotted to a first-year string class in the U.S. today. Yes, No

95% 5%

Statement 13: Students are often started too late (age) in first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

37% 63%

Statement 14: There is a lack of standardization (age, class size, heterogeneous/homogeneous grouping, number of classes/week, length of class.) Yes, No

85% 15%
Statement 15: There are often scheduling problems for first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

89% 11%

Statement 16: Classes of first-year string players are often too large in the U.S. today. Yes, No

63% 37%

Statement 17: Teaching facilities and location of classes are often inadequate for first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

94% 6%
Section III: TEACHING LOCATION; where do you feel first-year class string teaching can be most effective? More Suitable, Less Suitable

Statement 18: Classes held in PUBLIC SCHOOLS and PRIVATE SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
<td>15</td>
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Q/S 18

16% 84%

Statement 19: Classes held in COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (not related to public or private schools, usually run by parents and/or private teachers)

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<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
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Q/S 19

68% 32%

Statement 20: Please explain why you chose either statement 18 or 19 as second choice.

Section IV: VARIABLES

Ideal Student Age Less Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 21: Age 8-9 (3rd-4th Grade)

<table>
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<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
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Q/S 21

26% 74%
Statement 22: Age 10-11 (5\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} Grade)

![Bar chart](image)

70%  30%

Statement 23: Please explain why you chose either statement 21 or 22 as second best

**Class Size** Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 24: 5-10 students

![Bar chart](image)

16%  16%  68%

Statement 25: 10-15 students

![Bar chart](image)

11%  79%  11%

Statement 26: 15-20 students

![Bar chart](image)

84%  16%
Statement 27: Additional comments

**Frequency of Class Meetings** Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable, Most Suitable

Statement 28: Class meets 1-2 times per week

![Histogram](image1)

- Less Suitable: 65%
- Suitable: 25%
- More Suitable: 10%

Statement 29: Class meets 2-3 times per week

![Histogram](image2)

- Less: 5%
- Suitable: 60%
- More: 20%
- Most: 15%

Statement 30: Class meets 3-4 times per week

![Histogram](image3)

- Less Suitable: 5%
- Suitable: 20%
- More Suitable: 70%
- Most Suitable: 5%
Statement 31: Class meets 4-5 times per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q/S 31</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Suitable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Suitable</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement 32: Additional comments

**Combination of Group and Individual Lessons:** what works best – group or a combination of group and individual lessons?

Statement 33: The string class meets 2-3 times per week, AND each student gets one 20-minute individual lesson per week. Less Suitable, More Suitable

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<tr>
<th>Q/S 33</th>
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<tr>
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<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
<td>55%</td>
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Statement 34: The string class meets 4-5 times a week, NO individual lessons given

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<th>Q/S 34</th>
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<tr>
<td>More Suitable</td>
<td>53%</td>
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Statement 35: Additional comments
Length of Class Time: what is the ideal amount of time for the first-year string class? Less Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 36: 30 minutes

<table>
<thead>
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75% 25%

Statement 37: 45 minutes

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>20</td>
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</table>

20% 80%

Statement 38: Additional comments

Homogeneous or Heterogeneous Classes: which is preferable? Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 39: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously (a violin/viola class, and a separate cello/bass class)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Count</th>
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<th>Suitable</th>
<th>More Suitable</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10% 55% 35%
Statement 40: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously, with bass being taught separately from cello.

15% 40% 45%

Statement 41: First-year string classes should be grouped heterogeneously (violin, viola, cello, and bass taught together in the same class)

70% 10% 20%

Statement 42: Additional comments

**Heterogeneous/Homogeneous Combinations: notwithstanding how you responded above, please rate statements 43-44.** Less Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 43: The first-year string class should be grouped homogeneously for the first 2-4 months and then subsequently it should be grouped heterogeneously for each class meeting.

58% 42%
Statement 44: The first-year string class should meet 1-3 times homogeneously and 1 time heterogeneously (for an ensemble experience) in the same week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Less Suitable</th>
<th>More Suitable</th>
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</table>

47% 53%

Statement 45: Additional comments or suggestions

METHOD BOOKS: do the current commercial method books represent what teachers need and want for the ideal first-year string class?

Statement 46: Do you feel that current commercial method books offer, for the most part, enough variety and completeness of content to teachers and students of first-year string classes? Yes, No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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80% 20%

Statement 47: Do you feel that teachers of first-year string students, IN GENERAL, have enough knowledge of different methodologies to know how to adequately choose an appropriate method book for their classes? Yes, No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</table>

68% 32%
PERFORMANCES: how often and with what content should first-year string classes perform?

Statement 48: The first public performance by a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, beautiful tone on open strings, and a few simple tunes. Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 49: The first-year string class should give 2 or more public performances during the year. Yes, No

![Bar Chart](image)

85% Yes, 15% No

Statement 50: The first concert should occur when the teacher deems the class is ready, EVEN IF THIS IS AFTER the traditional/usual first concert in December. Yes, No

![Bar Chart](image)

79% Yes, 21% No

MISCELLANEOUS SKILLS

Statement 51: Do you agree that the 4th finger should be introduced to violins and violas in the first-year string class? Yes, No

Yes, 100%
Statement 52: Should all four strings be introduced in the ideal first-year string class?
Yes, 90%
No, 10%

Statement 53: Should improvisation be part of the ideal first-year string class experience?
Yes, 84%
No, 16%

GENERAL MUSIC AS A FOUNDATION FOR FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSES

Statement 54: Do you agree that, regarding students having general music classes before they begin to learn to play a string instrument, the following statement represents your view to a high degree? IDEALLY ALL YOUNG CHILDREN, KINDERGARTEN-5TH GRADE, WILL BE PROVIDED A GENERAL MUSIC CLASS TAUGHT BY A GOOD MUSIC SPECIALIST WHO EXPOSES AND TRAINS STUDENTS IN AURAL, RHYTHMIC/MOVEMENT, AND SINGING SKILLS. Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 55: Do you agree that IF A GOOD GENERAL MUSIC FOUNDATION HAS NOT BEEN PROVIDED FOR THE FIRST-YEAR STRING STUDENT, THE TEACHER OF A FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASS MUST BE QUALIFIED AND INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH THE STUDENTS TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN THESE SKILLS? Yes, No

Yes, 100% (1 abstained)
Statement 56: Do you agree that, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO MANDATE THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE EXCELLENT GENERAL MUSIC CLASSES AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL? Yes, No

Yes, 100%

OVERALL FOCUS IN THE FIRST-YEAR STRING INSTRUMENT CLASSROOM Yes, No

Statement 57: Ear training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

95% 5%

Statement 58: Development of rhythmic skills Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 59: Posture and instrument hold/position Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 60: Bow hold and bow stroke Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 61: Left-hand shape and position Yes, No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

95% 5%

83
Statement 62: Tone production and beautiful tone Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 63: Intonation Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 64: Ability to play simple tunes Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Statement 65: Note reading PREPARATION Yes, No

Yes, 100% (1 abstained)

Statement 66: Note reading Yes, No

85% 15%

Statement 67: Additions and/or comments regarding statements 57-66 above
COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSROOM

Statement 68: Please rank the following 10 statements with #1 being the most important and #10 being the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who is qualified, persistent, enthusiastic, and well-trained</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who provides care/attention to students</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who provides positive modeling</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who gives constant reinforcement of good technique</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who is able to monitor progress and adjust lesson plan for problem areas</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher who provides structure to class and is consistent</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality instruments are available</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate class time and space</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive parents</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear expectations set by the teacher and administration</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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Statement 69: Additional comments
ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL TEACHER

Statement 70: Please rank the following 10 statements with #1 being the most important and #10 being the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is able to communicate with passion and love the joy of learning to</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play a string instrument</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has energy, enthusiasm, and a positive/encouraging attitude</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>3. Has patience, loves children</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>4. Has organizational skills</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>5. Has good musicianship and is a competent player</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>6. Is able to listen and assess students' abilities appropriately</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>7. Knows how to pick appropriate music for programs</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>8. Is able to pace a lesson appropriately</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>9. Has a sense of humor</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>10. Is able to think on feet and adjust teaching as necessary</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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Statement 71: Additional comments
PACE OF FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSES: What variables contribute most?

Statement 72: Please rank the following 8 statements, with #1 being the most important and #8 being the least important.

1. The progress of the students, overall and individually
   - Rank: 56% 6% 11% 0% 0% 11% 11% 6%
   - Percentages: 10 1 2 0 0 2 2 1
2. Age of students
   - Rank: 33% 17% 11% 11% 11% 0% 11% 6%
   - Percentages: 6 3 2 2 2 0 2 1
3. Length of class time
   - Rank: 39% 11% 11% 22% 17% 0% 0% 0%
   - Percentages: 7 2 2 4 3 0 0 0
4. Class size
   - Rank: 33% 17% 22% 11% 6% 11% 0% 0%
   - Percentages: 6 3 4 2 1 2 0 0
5. Frequency of class meetings
   - Rank: 33% 11% 22% 28% 0% 6% 0% 0%
   - Percentages: 6 2 4 5 0 1 0 0
6. Whether class is heterogeneously or homogeneously grouped
   - Rank: 22% 11% 11% 0% 22% 22% 6% 6%
   - Percentages: 4 2 2 0 4 4 1 1
7. Speed of mastery of basics (instrument position, bow hold, accurate intonation/rhythm, and tone)
   - Rank: 33% 11% 6% 6% 6% 17% 17% 6%
   - Percentages: 6 2 1 1 1 3 3 1
8. Recognition that each class is different
   - Rank: 39% 6% 0% 0% 0% 0% 11% 39%
   - Percentages: 7 1 0 0 1 0 2 7

Statement 73: Additional comments

Statement 74: If a non-string music major is being considered as a teacher for a first-year string class, should there be certain minimum requirements as a condition of being hired? (E.g., demonstration of ability to produce a good tone, play in tune, demonstrate proper instrument position and bow hold, etc.) Yes, No

- Yes: 90%
- No: 10%

Statement 75: THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS THAT NEED TO BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSES: Please rank statements 1-8 with #1 being the most important and #8 being the least important.
Statement 76: Additional comments

Round 2 Summary of Results

Consensus Questions/Statements

In Round 2, the following 38 questions/statements, of 59, yielded consensus (64%):

Q/S 1: There are many dedicated, excellent teachers in the U.S. today.

Consensus (N = 19) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 2: There is more and higher quality material, including real teaching pieces (rather than transcriptions), in the U. S. today.

Consensus (N = 19) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 3: There are excellent first-year string method books available in the U.S. today.

Consensus (N = 20) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.
Q/S 4: There are a growing number of string students (and growing amount of interest in string instruments) in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 5: There is more opportunity, in general, for taking first-year string classes in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 6: There is more rote teaching (ear training) than before in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 7: There are better recruiting efforts being made for first-year string players in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 16$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 10: There are too many teachers who are lacking a methodology (ergo, not all basics are being taught) in their teaching of first-year string players in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 16$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 12: Teaching is often hurried because too often there is not enough time allotted to a first-year string class in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 18$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 14: There is a lack of standardization (age, class size, heterogeneous/homogeneous grouping, number of classes/week, length of class).
Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 15: There are often scheduling problems for first-year string classes in the U.S. today.
Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.
**Q/S 17:** Teaching facilities and location of classes are often inadequate for first-year string classes in the U.S. today.

Consensus \((N = 17)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 18:** Classes held in PUBLIC SCHOOLS and PRIVATE SCHOOLS (Teaching Location).

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached with those stating that this choice is More Suitable.

**Q/S 26:** 15-20 students (Class Size).

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached among those agreeing that this number is Less Suitable.

**Q/S 29:** Class meets 2-3 times per week (Frequency of Class Meetings).

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached within the categories Suitable-More Suitable.

**Q/S 30:** Class meets 3-4 times per week (Frequency of Class Meetings).

Consensus \((N = 18)\) was reached within categories Suitable-More Suitable.

**Q/S 37:** 45 minutes (Length of Class Time).

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached among those stating this was More Suitable.

**Q/S 46:** Do you feel that current commercial method books offer, for the most part, enough variety and completeness of content to teachers and students of first-year string classes?

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 48:** The first public performance by a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, beautiful tone on open strings, and a few simple tunes.

Consensus \((N = 20)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.
**Q/S 49:** The first-year string class should give 2 or more public performances during the year.

Consensus \((N = 17)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 51:** Do you agree that the 4\(^{th}\) finger should be introduced to violins and violas in the first-year string class?

Consensus \((N = 20)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 52:** Should all four strings be introduced in the ideal first-year string class?

Consensus \((N = 18)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 53:** Should improvisation be part of the ideal first-year string class experience?

Consensus \((N = 16)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 54:** Do you agree that, regarding students having general music classes before they begin to learn to play a string instrument, the following statement represents your view to a high degree? Ideally all young children, kindergarten-5\(^{th}\) grade, will be provided a general music class taught by a good music specialist who exposes and trains students in aural, rhythmic/movement, and singing skills.

Consensus \((N = 20)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 55:** Do you agree that if a good general music foundation has not been provided for the first-year string student, the teacher of a first-year string class must be qualified and interested in working with students to provide training in these skills?

Consensus \((N = 19)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 56:** Do you agree that, parents, teachers, and administrators need to work together to mandate that all students have the opportunity to have excellent general music classes at the elementary level?
Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 57**: Ear training (Skills that Should be Part of the Overall Focus in the First-Year String Instrument Classroom).

Consensus ($N = 19$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 58**: Development of rhythmic skills (same as above).

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 59**: Posture and instrument hold/position.

Consensus ($N = 19$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 60**: Bow hold and bow stroke.

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 61**: Left-hand shape and position.

Consensus ($N = 19$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 62**: Tone production and beautiful tone.

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 63**: Intonation.

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 64**: Ability to play simple tunes.

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 65**: Note reading PREPARATION.

Consensus ($N = 19$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 66**: Note reading.

Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.
**Q/S 74:** If a non-string music major is being considered as a teacher for a first-year string class, should there be certain minimum requirements as a condition of being hired? (E.g., demonstration of ability to produce a good tone, play in tune, demonstrate proper instrument position and bow hold, etc.).

Consensus \((N = 18)\) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Non-Consensus Questions/Statements**

No consensus was reached on Questions/Statements 8, 9, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 31, 33, 34, 36, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 47, and 50 in Round 2.

The topics of these non-consensus questions/statements ranged from whether or not there are too many first-year string students who are not taught by a string specialist (or by a weak non-string player) to continuing disagreement among the panelists on the variables of the best age for a student to begin class study on a string instrument, class size, class frequency, and class length. For further detail, see Appendix P.

There were problems in analyzing Questions/Statements 68 70 72, and 75 that requested ranking. Half of the panelists \((N = 10)\) used a rating system instead of the requested ranking.

**Round 3 Survey Procedures**

Based on the Round 2 survey responses, changes were made for the Round 3 survey. First, for the Round 2 Questions/Statements 68, 70, 72, and 75, mentioned above, I felt that it was possible to use the information gathered from these four statements from Round 2, even though half the panelists had used a rating system rather than the requested ranking system. I took the issues that appeared to have the highest ratings and rankings \((80\% \text{ or higher})\) and put them before the panel in Round 3 in a statement format
to see if there was agreement in this new form. This revision was the basis for Questions/Statements 23, 24, 25, and 26 in Round 3. Second, based on written responses in Round 2, some of the questions in Round 2 were changed from statements requiring Yes/No responses to Questions/Statements 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 that required the responses of *Less, Same, or More* in Round 3. Third, in order to garner the opinions of the expert panelists regarding some of the topics on variables (i.e., age, class size) and several miscellaneous issues for which consensus had still not been determined in Round 2, Questions/Statements 15-22 were included as open-ended response statements in Round 3.

As in the previous round, all panelists were asked to review the responses from the Round 2 survey in preparation for taking the Round 3 survey. In addition, as before, they were instructed to explain any negative responses.

The twenty panelists were sent (electronically and by hardcopy) the Round 3 survey, with instructions, at the end of March 2004. All surveys had been returned by April 9, 2004.

The survey questions/statements/additional comments of Round 3 are reported below. However, the section on personal information (questions/statements 27-35) is included here without the responses. The demographic information is reported earlier in this chapter.

**Round 3 Survey Instrument Numerical Results**

In this section, only the quantifiable responses will be presented. The written responses can found in the appendix section (see Appendix R).
Section I: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRINGPLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY

Question/Statement 1: What is your perception of the status of the availability of first-year string instruction in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

Question/Statement 2: Please briefly define what ROTE TEACHING in first-year string classes means to you.

Question/Statement 3: What is your perception of the amount of rote teaching in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

Question/Statement 4: Please briefly define what EAR TRAINING in first-year string classes means to you.
Question/Statement 5: What is your perception of the amount of ear training in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

![Bar Chart]

- Less: 25%
- Same: 35%
- More: 40%

Question/Statement 6: What is your perception of the amount of recruiting for first-year string classes in the U.S. public schools today as compared with 10-15 years ago?

![Bar Chart]

- Less: 5%
- Same: 35%
- More: 60%

Question/Statement 7: What is your perception of the QUALITY of recruiting for first-year string students in the U.S. public schools as compared with 10-15 years ago?

![Bar Chart]

- Less: 10%
- Same: 35%
- More: 55%
Question/Statement 8: Do you feel that the psychology of teaching should be an important component in the training of teachers of first-year string teachers at the university level?

![Bar chart](Q/S 8)

90% 10%

Question/Statement 9: What do you think needs to be done, if anything, to improve the overall quality of first-year string teachers in the U.S. public schools?

Question/Statement 10: Very briefly describe the METHODOLOGY (defined as: set of methods, principles, rules for regulating a given discipline) you would use in teaching a first-year string class.

Question/Statement 11: Please rate the three statements below as 1, 2, or 3 (do not use a number more than once, please!) with 1 = first choice; 2 = second choice; and 3 = third choice.

A. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on teaching basic skills (such as instrument position, posture, bow hold/stroke, left-hand shape)

![Bar chart](Q/S 11a)

65% 30% 5%
B. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on playing simple melodies

![Bar chart showing choices]

- First choice: 10%
- Second choice: 20%
- Third choice: 70%

C. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be equally placed on skill development and learning simple melodies

![Bar chart showing choices]

- First choice: 35%
- Second choice: 45%
- Third choice: 20%

Question/Statement 12: Theoretically (if necessary) accepting the statement: IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO BEGIN INSTRUCTION ON A STRING INSTRUMENT, how would you structure the inclusion of a student who wishes to begin later than the norm for his/her school program?

Question/Statement 13: Do you agree that the size of a first-year string class should MOSTLY be based on teacher preference and/or expertise?

![Bar chart showing choices]

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%
Question/Statement 14: Briefly describe what you think would be an ideal relationship between a PUBLIC SCHOOL and a COMMUNITY SCHOOL (unrelated to public or private schools and often run by parents and/or private teachers).

Section 2: MISCELLANEOUS

Question/Statement 15: Using the variables, AGE, CLASS SIZE, FREQUENCY OF CLASS MEETINGS, LENGTH OF CLASS MEETINGS, and HETEROGENEOUS/HOMOGENEOUS class grouping, please briefly describe (may be in list format) the ideal first-year string class situation FOR YOU. In other words, list the preferred age, class size, class frequency, class length, and grouping (heterogeneous or homogeneous) for a first-year string class that you would love to teach! Add details that will help in clarification. Please presuppose that you have the dream administrative team, supportive parents, and that money, time, and physical space are at your command! Dream on…

Question/Statement 16: Please describe briefly, how you would introduce improvisation into a first-year string class.

Question/Statement 17: Please describe, briefly, how you think the skill of note reading should be handled in a first-year string class. E.g., should notes be placed in front of the student at a certain point (when?); or, should there be preparation (pre-reading work) before notes are placed in front of the student; or, etc.

Question/Statement 18: Please describe, briefly, what the statement “A FINE STRING PROGRAM” means to you.

Question/Statement 19: Please describe, briefly, what specific efforts, in your opinion, should be made for the improvement of first-year string classes.

Question/Statement 20: Please describe, briefly, how information, such as research results, might be more effectively distributed to teachers of first-year string classes.

Question/Statement 21: What suggestions do you have for improving the preparation of first-year string class teachers?

Question/Statement 22: In your opinion, what specific courses for the preparation of first-year string teachers should be included in university/college training?
Section 3: COMPONENTS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUCCESSFUL FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASS.

Question/Statement 23: Do you agree that the two most important components for success in the first-year string classroom are: 1) Teacher who is qualified, persistent, enthusiastic, and well trained; and, 2) Adequate class time and space? Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Question/Statement 24: Do you agree that the two most important attributes (among others) of a first-year string teacher are: 1) Is able to pace a lesson appropriately; and, 2) Has a sense of humor? Yes, No

63% 37%

Question/Statement 25: Do you agree that the pace of a first-year string class is mostly determined by: 1) Age of students, 2) Length of class time, 3) Class size, and 4) Frequency of class meetings? Yes, No

Yes, 100% (2 abstained)

Question/Statement 26: Do you agree that the most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes are: 1) Be sure that those teaching first-year string classes are well-trained, 2) Get support from administrators to provide adequate teaching time, and 3) Get support from administrators to provide adequate facilities? Yes, No

Yes, 100%

Round 3 Summary of Results

Consensus Questions/Statements

In Round 3, the following 9 questions/statements, of 12 items, yielded consensus (75%):
**Q/S 1:** What is your perception of the status of the availability of first-year string instruction in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

Consensus ($N = 18$) was reached among those responding in the Same-More range.

**Q/S 3:** What is your perception of the amount of rote teaching in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

Consensus ($N = 17$) was reached among those responding in the Same-More range.

**Q/S 6:** What is your perception of the amount of recruiting for first-year string classes in the U.S. public schools today as compared with 10-15 years ago?

Consensus ($N = 19$) was reached among those responding in the Same-More range.

**Q/S 7:** What is your perception of the QUALITY of recruiting for first-year string students in the U.S. public schools as compared with 10-15 years ago?

Consensus ($N = 18$) was reached among those responding in the Same-More range.

**Q/S 8:** Do you feel that the psychology of teaching should be an important component in the training of teachers of first-year string students at the university level?

Consensus ($N = 18$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 13:** Do you agree that the size of a first-year string class should MOSTLY be based on teacher preference and/or expertise?

Consensus ($N = 16$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

**Q/S 23:** Do you agree that the two most important components for success in the first-year string class are: 1) Teacher who is qualified, persistent, enthusiastic, and well trained; and 2) Adequate class time and space?

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.
Q/S 25: Do you agree that the pace of a first-year string class is mostly determined by: 1) Age of students, 2) Length of class time, 3) Class size and, 4) Frequency of class meetings?

Consensus ($N = 18$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Q/S 26: Do you agree that the most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes are: 1) Be sure that those teaching first-year string classes are well-trained, 2) Get support from administrators to provide adequate teaching time, and 3) Get support from administrators to provide adequate facilities?

Consensus ($N = 20$) was reached among those agreeing with the statement.

Non-Consensus Questions/Statements

No consensus was reached on Questions/Statements 5, 11, and 24 in Round 3. For further detail, see Appendix Q. These questions/statements are listed below:

Q/S 5: What is your perception of the amount of ear training in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

The responses were spread almost evenly between Less, Same, and More.

Q/S 11: Rate each of the following statements: 1) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on teaching basic skills (such as instrument position, posture, bow hold/stroke, left-hand shape); 2) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on playing simple melodies; and, 3) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be equally placed on skill development and learning simple melodies.

The responses were spread throughout; however, the most prevalent choice was for the first one.
Q/S 24: Do you agree that two of the most important attributes (among others) of a first-year string teacher are: 1) is able to pace a lesson appropriately; and, 2) has a sense of humor.

The responses were divided: 12 panelists said Yes; 7 panelists said No; 1 panelist did not respond.

Chapter Summary

Consensus Topics

The nine general topics that were used in Rounds 1-3 of the survey are printed in bold face below. The specific items on which consensus was determined by the panelists are bulleted.

The panelists agreed that:

1. General Satisfaction with String Teaching in the U.S.
   - There is a growing number of string students in the U.S. today
   - There is more opportunity, in general, for taking first-year string classes in the U.S. today
   - The availability of first-year string instruction is greater today than it was 10-15 years ago

2. Teaching Location
   - Community Schools are Suitable-More Suitable
   - Commercial Music Houses are Less Suitable-Suitable
   - It is more suitable for string classes to be held in Public and Private Schools (rather than community schools and commercial music houses)
   - Teaching facilities and location of classes are often inadequate for first-year string classes in the U.S. today
3. Variables: Age, Class Size, Class Frequency, Class Length, Class Grouping

- The age of 3-5 years is Not Suitable-Less Suitable for starting students on a string instrument in a class setting

- The age of 8-9 is best for beginning a string instrument in a class setting

- String classes meeting 2-3 times a week, with each student getting one 15-minute individual lesson/week, is Most Suitable-More Suitable

- Classes meeting 2-3 times per week, with no private lesson, is in the Suitable-Most suitable range

- Classes meeting 1-2 times per week is Less Suitable than those meeting more frequently

- Classes meeting 3-4 times per week is Suitable to More Suitable

- A 45-minute class length is Most Suitable-More Suitable

- Teaching is often [too] hurried because not enough time is allotted for first-year string classes in the U.S. today

- Having 15-20 students in a class is Less Suitable than smaller class sizes

- Having 25-30 students in a class is Not Suitable-Less Suitable

- Having 30+ students in a class is Not Suitable

- That the size of a first-year string class should mostly be based on teacher preference and/or expertise.

- That the pacing of a first-year string class is mostly determined by the age of the students, length of class time, class size, and frequency of class meetings

- There is a lack of standardization (age, class size, class frequency, class length, heterogeneous/homogeneous grouping)

- There are often scheduling problems for first-year string classes in the U.S. today
4. **Method Books/Music**

- There are excellent first-year string method books available in the U.S. today

- Commercial method books offer, for the most part, enough variety and completeness of content to teachers and students of first-year string classes

- There is more and higher quality material, including real [string] teaching pieces (rather than transcriptions), in the U.S. today

5. **Performances**

- Not having a public performance for the first-year string class is Not Suitable

- The first-year string class should give 2 or more public performances during the [first] year

- The first public performance by a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, beautiful tone on open strings, and a few simple tunes

6. **Improvisation, Rote Learning, Recruiting, and Skills**

- Improvisation should be a part of the first-year string class experience

- The amount of rote teaching has increased in the last 10-15 years

- The quality of recruiting for first-year string classes has increased in the last 10-15 years

- The 4<sup>th</sup> finger should be introduced to violins and violas in the first-year string class

- All four strings should be introduced in the first-year string class

7. **Teachers**

- There should be minimum standards/requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string classes

- There are many dedicated, excellent [string] teachers in the U.S. today
There are too many teachers who are lacking a methodology (basics not being taught) in their teaching of first-year string players in the U.S. today

If a non-string music major is being considered as a teacher for a first-year string class, there should be minimum requirements as a condition of employment (must be able to produce a good tone, play in tune, demonstrate proper instrument position and bow hold, etc.)

The psychology of teaching should be an important component in the university training of teachers of first-year string classes

That the two most important components for success in the first-year string classroom are having a teacher who is qualified, persistent, enthusiastic and well-trained; and having adequate class time and space

8. Overall Focus

There are better recruiting efforts being made for first-year string players in the U.S. today

The overall focus in the first-year string instrument classroom should include: ear training, development of rhythmic skills, posture and instrument hold/position, bow hold and bow stroke, left-hand shape and position, tone production and beautiful tone, good intonation, the ability to play simple tunes, note reading preparation, and note reading

9. Additional Topics

Changes in teaching first-year string need to be made, over time, by a partnership of ASTA, universities, and school teachers

Ideally, all young children, Kindergarten-Fifth Grade, will be provided a general music class taught by a good music specialist who exposes and trains students in aural, rhythmic/movement, and singing skills

If a good general music foundation has not been provided for the first-year string class student, the teacher of a first-year string class must be qualified and interested in working with the students to provide training in these skills

Parents, teachers, and administrators need to work together to mandate that all students have the opportunity to have excellent general music classes at the elementary level
The most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes are, 1) making sure that teachers of first-year string classes are well-trained, and 2) getting the support of administrators to provide adequate teaching time and adequate facilities.

**Non-Consensus Topics**

The panelists were unable to reach consensus on the following topics:

- Whether there is more ear training in first-year string classes today compared to 10-15 years ago
- The adequacy, in general, of the non-string player and his/her teaching in the first-year string classroom
- Whether it is ever too late to begin playing a string instrument in a class setting
- The role of Community Schools in first-year string teaching
- Issues regarding heterogeneous and homogeneous class grouping
- Specific improvements that are needed for the first-year string class to be successful other than the components and skills that reached consensus in this study
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The problem investigated for this study was: What specific components and skills do today’s experts agree are foundational for a successful, first-year string-instrument, K-8 classroom? To seek answers, a three-round modified Delphi Technique survey, given to a panel of 20 experts in first-year string classroom teaching at the elementary level, was used. The survey instruments, created for three investigational rounds, sought to determine which components and skills are necessary for supporting a successful first-year string class.

The panelists were asked to envision a personally ideal classroom situation as they responded to the questions/statements in each of the three rounds of the survey. To help them to do this, they were cautioned to suspend the usual constraints that string teachers frequently face, such as building schedules, inadequate room sizes, and district-determined grade level for beginning string classes.

Throughout the three survey rounds, the panelists were given frequent opportunity to respond to specific questions/statements and to give additional comments. Also, the panelists were asked to explain any negative response they gave. At the end of each round, the panelists had access to the responses of all the other panelists and were
requested to read and think about these responses prior to working on the subsequent round.

The panelists were asked to consider changing their response, in Round 2, to agree with the majority if they had given a response to a question/statement, in Round 1 that was outside the majority range. If, in Round 2, they still did not agree with the majority, they were asked to defend their position once again. This procedure is an important aspect of the Delphi Technique since this method simulates continuing dialog during which a person may be swayed by additional knowledge or another panelist’s viewpoint.

In Round 1, several of the questions were deliberately presented in an open-ended response mode in order to give panelists some opportunity, at the onset, to contribute their ideas and suggestions for inclusion in subsequent rounds. There were six general sections in Round 1. The expert panelists were asked to respond to a range of issues including: 1) general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the state of first-year string education today, 2) teaching location, 3) variables relating to class structure, 4) method books, 5) first-year performances, and 6) a section of additional topics. The panelists were cautioned to only consider the first-year experience of a string class when responding to any question/statement. When all surveys had been returned, panelists were asked to review the responses of the other panelists. In Round 1, consensus was yielded on 21% (9 out of 40) of the questions/statements.

Round 2 was a refinement of Round 1. Questions/statements on which the panelists had reached consensus in Round 1 were eliminated in Round 2, as per the Delphi Technique. Those questions/statements for which consensus was not attained
were used again in Round 2, usually in a different format or with different modes of response. For example, in Round 1, an open-ended question, Q/S 51, asked, *what should be the overall focus in the first-year string classroom?* The responses to this question provided the basis for Q/S 57-68 in Round 2 (see Appendix Q).

When all Round 2 surveys had been returned, panelists were again asked to review the responses of the other panelists. In Round 2 consensus was yielded on 64% (38 out of 59) of the questions/statements.

In Round 3, questions/statements, for which consensus still had not been reached, were broken into smaller units to see if, in this new form, consensus could be reached by the panelists for some of these smaller units. This did occur, since in Round 3 consensus was yielded on 83% (10 out of 12) of the questions/statements.

There were two questions/statements in Round 3, Q/S 5 and Q/S 24, for which consensus was not reached: 1) What is your perception of the amount of ear training in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. today as compared to 10-15 years ago? 2) Do you agree that two of the most important attributes (among others) of a first-year string teacher are: a) the teacher is able to pace a lesson appropriately and, b) the teacher has a sense of humor?

The next portion of this chapter will review some of the individual written responses from the panelists in more detail. It will also include a discussion of the consensus and non-consensus issues, across all three rounds of the survey instrument, and will relate the findings with the literature. The six general sections, listed above, will be discussed individually.
Discussion and Implications of the Findings

First of all, it must be stated that the findings of this survey are not conclusive. This study would need to be replicated and the survey distributed to a larger group of practitioners and pedagogues to determine if any trends can be established. However, the findings do present a basis for future research.

This discussion will focus on the implications of both the consensus and non-consensus issues of Rounds 1-3 of the study survey. Each of the topics will be presented separately. The implications revealed in this discussion will lead to the final section of this chapter: recommendations for research.

General Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with the State of First-Year String Education

In Round 1, Q/S 1-3 sought to determine the degree of panelist agreement on their general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with first-year string teaching in the U.S. today. It was interesting to find that over half the panelists (57%) expressed that they were not satisfied, in general, with the way first-year string classes are taught in the U.S. today. A variety of responses were given. For example, one panelist stated, “Without any standards for class size, heterogeneous vs. homogeneous groups, age at which children start and learning to read music, it is hard to be satisfied with classes as they are.” Another expressed concern that, “Many string students are not taught by string specialists. This is a severe hindrance to their progress.”

Perhaps it is safe to assume, that the wide range of responses to this question reflects the varying personal situations that seem to prevail in string teaching at the elementary level in the schools of the U.S. In any case, the responses in this round brought up topics that are not new to string education. In fact, these very topics were
presented to the panelists in later questions/statements in the same round, since they appeared in both the pilot study and the literature. This suggests that the topics the panelists brought up as evidence of dissatisfaction with current string teaching are ongoing topics for discussion.

Question/Statement 3 asked for perceived weaknesses of first-year classroom string teaching and yielded responses similar to those who had expressed dissatisfaction in Q/S 1. Since all panelists responded to this item, it seems that there is general agreement among the panelists regarding the negative aspects of first-year classroom string teaching at the elementary level. The majority of the responses centered on teacher qualifications, lack of support, and the variables of class size, frequency, and beginning age of students.

On the other hand, the experts do agree that there seems to be a healthier climate for success in first-year string classes in the U.S. today than there was 10-15 years ago. Consensus was attained with Round 2 Question/Statement 4 (100%) that stated: There are a growing number of string students. Although this is a rather vague and narrow description, it does indicate, perhaps, that there is a perception of well being among string experts regarding the potential for string development in the schools today – it is not all gloom and doom.

There was also consensus with Q/S 5 (89%) that stated: There are more opportunities for taking a first-year string class. This question/statement was similar to Q/S 4. However, five panelists questioned the statistical basis for Q/S 5. One panelist put it this way, “Actual statistics are needed for a proper response to this question.”
This is a valid observation. However, the purpose of this survey was to ascertain the perceptions of the experts, not their knowledge of the statistics. Since we live in a world that often seems to be driven more by personal perception than scientific fact, it is important to know what the general perceptions of string specialists are. Because there was not consensus on the degree of satisfaction with the status of first-year string education in the U.S. today, I believe it is safe to say that there are many issues that need to be brought to the attention of string educators and teachers. Further, discussion on these issues needs to be encouraged. If we can come to agreement, through consensus in this study, as to the issues that need to be brought to the discussion table, progress will have been made.

**Teaching Location**

Teaching location was the second topic of discussion in Round 1 and contained four questions/statements. Consensus was reached on Q/S 5 and Q/S 7. Although there was strong agreement in Q/S 4 in the Suitable, More Suitable, and Most Suitable range, regarding the public and private schools as a location for first-year string classrooms, the responses were split (see Appendix P). Only ten of the panelists made comments on this topic. One panelist stated tersely that, “The location is only as suitable as the quality of the teacher.” Another opined that, “The space is not important anyway. The main issue is the avoidance of distractions.”

Public/private schools and community schools were both deemed by the experts as suitable for first-year string class instruction. A panelist summed up this position in a positive manner, “In public, private and community schools, students who may not have had the opportunity to study an instrument are given one. It is in those arenas that we
reach the most students, making string playing for everyone, not just for those who can afford it.”

This is an important issue. Yarbrough (2000) gives a compelling argument for the development of partnerships between public schools and community based centers. The responses of the panelists were in agreement with her views that suggest that cooperation between the two venues will provide the most opportunities for the general public in regards to music education.

Commercial music houses, given as an additional teaching location possibility in the Round 1 survey (Q/S 7), received the least favorable overall rating with a consensus of 86% in the Less Suitable-Suitable range. Among the reasons given for responding negatively to commercial music houses as venues were, 1) “Music stores don’t maintain [a] competent stable of teachers,” and 2) “Commercial stores in general do not screen their teachers as well [as the other options] for quality.” These responses were consistent with anecdotal knowledge. However, it was interesting that the response ranges were so wide on this topic. More research is needed on this.

In comparing the Round 1 findings for community schools (Q/S 5) with those of conservatories as a teaching location (Q/S 6), we see how closely they were rated, although music conservatories were rated slightly higher, overall, than community schools. There were no written comments about conservatories as a teaching location.

It seems that string teachers experience a general frustration with the lack of a formal or official “home” for first-year string classes in the school building. The teaching locations, as corroborated in the pilot study, range from boiler rooms and hallways to sharing a room space with another class. It is unusual for teachers to have a choice
regarding the location of their string class, or, for that matter, to have a choice regarding the other variables discussed below. As a possible solution, Gillespie & Hamann (1998) propose that,

> If the majority of instructional facilities were found to be inadequate in teachers’ opinions, then perhaps professional organizations such as the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) could draw up suggested guidelines that school systems might use in their facility planning (p. 77).

I suggest that ASTA, in conjunction with MENC, propose a set of guidelines that would outline the minimum space and configuration of a rehearsal space that would be unique to teaching strings.

**Variables Relating to Class Structure**

The third section in Round 1, about variables relating to class structure, contained 22 questions/statements. The five variables--age, class size, class frequency, class length, and class grouping (heterogeneous/homogeneous)--yielded, as a group, less consensus than any other topic related to first-year string classes. This was true for all rounds of this survey. This section yielded consensus on three topics: class frequency, class length, and class size.

The panelists felt that first-year string classes work best if: 1) Classes meet 2-3 times per week, and it is even better, if a 15-20 minute private lesson is included (Q/S 15); 2) Classes meet for 45 minutes (Q/S 26); and 3) Class size does not exceed 15 students.

Two examples that indicate the range of responses in this section include the following: 1) “Optimum size of class depends on facilities, frequency of instruction, and teacher quality. But, all things being equal, a group of 20-25 students is efficient, offers a
positive group dynamic, [and] allows for some individualization or small group work.”

2) “Numbers are inversely proportional to teachers effectiveness even with good group teaching techniques.”

This issue is complicated since each variable is dependent on the others. Although each of the five variables will receive a more detailed analysis below, it will be evident that none stands alone.

Age

For the variable of age of young first-year string students, there was consensus that pre-schoolers (age 3-5) should not begin a string instrument in a class setting. Several panelists stated that a one-on-one approach is more effective than a class setting for very young children beginning a string instrument. In the U.S., some people, including string teachers, mistakenly believe that the Suzuki approach is a class method. However, as one panelist correctly pointed out, “Suzuki instruction is appropriate for preschool age, but that [Suzuki instruction] is generally private instruction with some limited group lessons, and not strictly group instruction.” Suzuki, himself, has made it clear that the inherent mother-child relationship is essential to his philosophy that posits that every child can learn to play the violin. Kjelland (1997) reinforces this when he says, “Trying to apply bona fide Suzuki instruction in a public school setting…by definition cannot work” (p. 106).

The age of 8-9 for beginning string instrument instruction reached the most agreement among the expert panelists. Although there was not consensus, all the responses in Round 1 were located in the Suitable, More Suitable, and Most Suitable range. Since none of the other suggested age groups in the survey reached consensus (in
fact, the responses were spread throughout the Not Suitable-Most Suitable range), this might suggest that this is the age group that the panelists think is best for beginning a string instrument in a class setting. In addition, research shows (Doerksen & Delzell, 2000) that more than half of first-year string classes in the U.S. begin in the 3rd and 4th grades.

However, in Round 2, when the options were narrowed to two choices, Less Suitable and More Suitable, there still was not consensus (Q/S 21) although the majority (74%) favored 3rd-4th grade for beginning a string instrument. This was a surprise and it appears that this topic lends itself to further investigation.

Class Size

The panelists were in more agreement about class size. Most felt that a class with 12 or fewer students was ideal. One suggested, however, that, “[It] depends on age & frequency of classes. More frequent meetings make larger class sizes possible.” Based on the responses in Rounds 1 and 2, the panelists were asked, in Round 3, to agree or disagree with the statement that class size should mostly be based on teacher preference and/or expertise. Consensus was reached, for this statement, with 80% concurring that individual teacher preference and ability should be the deciding factors regarding the size of his/her class.

The variable of class size is, perhaps, the most dependent on the other variables that are being examined in this section. It is also the one for which personal preference seems to have the most bearing. I suspect that the attributes and characteristics of a first-year string teacher play a significant role.
However, it is sometimes the case that the string teacher is strongly encouraged to have large numbers of students in his/her classes since large numbers are sometimes equated with monetary value of the program. This is another area that would benefit from further research.

Class Length

Class length was the next variable examined in the survey. Half of the panelists responded that age is the determining factor for the length of a class period and that the younger the students in a beginning string class, the shorter the class length should be, since younger students have a shorter attention span. However, one of the panelists pointed out that, “There is no right answer; frequency of meeting is a variable that cannot be separated from this question; age as well, and whether the class is heterogeneous or homogeneous.” Another panelist echoing this sentiment, stated, “There is no possible correct or preferable answer without consideration of other variables.”

The important issue here, I believe, is the degree to which many of the panelists seemed to be unclear about the dependence each variable (age, class size, etc.) has on each of the other variables, even after this was pointed out by several panelists in the earlier rounds. This suggests a general lack of knowledge and/or understanding about the interdependence of these variables. Or, perhaps this could be attributed to not having opportunities to be part of the decision making process regarding these variables.

Class Frequency

As pointed out previously, there was consensus that the ideal first-year string class meets 2-3 times a week. The question/statement also included the words, “AND each student gets one 15-minute individual lesson per week.” The comments revealed
mixed feelings regarding the individual lesson portion of the statement. However, most
panelists did not address this. One panelist stated, “A combination is definitely the best!
Seeing first year students 4 to 5 times a week, even without individual lessons is still
wonderful. Even though private lessons are excellent, most students do not have a private
lesson more than once a week. Daily contact with the teacher is optimal.” This is an area
that needs more attention. Again, it is a complex issue since the other variables are
integral to it.

The inclusion of the phrase, each student should also receive one 15-minute
individual lesson per week (Q/S 15, Round 1), possibly contaminated the entire
question/statement. By including this phrase, I was trying to elicit how strongly the
panelists felt about giving specific attention to an individual student in a one-week
period. By juxtaposing Q/S 15 and Q/S 16, I wanted to see which the experts preferred: to
allot extra time with 1) the individual, or with 2) the entire class. It appears that they
prefer to give time to the individual since Q/S 15 did reach consensus. In the literature,
the combination of group and private lessons is mentioned in regard to Suzuki (Beegle,
2000; Kjelland, 1997). However, I recommend further study on this topic. Perhaps the
real issue is how the string teacher addresses individual needs in the classroom setting.

Class Grouping

Although consensus was not reached on the issue of class grouping, the panelists
showed preference for homogeneous grouping over heterogeneous grouping for the
first-year string class. One panelist suggested that,

Each string instrument offers its unique challenges so I feel separation is best at
first. An ensemble experience can still be had by doing separate violin, viola,
cello, double bass duos/trios/quartets in each homogeneous class. Get the
foundation solid, then bring the kids together when there is a least a minimum workable skill level.

From another point of view, a panelist averred that, “Assuming appropriate techniques and knowledge of the instructor, heterogeneous teaching is not a compromise and can be a strong motivator for students. The problem is, many teachers do not know HOW to handle mixed instrument teaching.”

This is another topic for which the responses of the panelists possibly reflected their personal experiences rather than considered knowledge. If a string teacher is not comfortable teaching a particular string instrument, he/she might prefer teaching a homogeneous group, teaching only their primary instrument. There is no doubt in my mind that it is absolutely necessary that each teacher of a first-year string class must have a thorough knowledge of the instruments he/she is teaching and that he/she can demonstrate excellent musicianship skills on the instruments, as well.

In summary, there was very little consensus, in all three rounds of the survey, on the variables of age, class size, etc. Are variables an issue because teachers have vested personal preferences? Or, is it because teachers sometimes have very little say, if any, regarding the determination of any of these variables.

Doerksen & Delzell (2000) conducted an interesting study in which they raised the question, “To what degree do professional recommendations coincide with actual practice? They compared (among others) the variables of grade starts, class frequency, and class length, as recommended by MENC’s *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards* publication, with the 1997 National Study of Beginning Band and Orchestra Programs findings. They found that, in general, “[there] is a degree of variability in the
recommended and actual learning opportunities associated with beginning strings” (p. 62). They suggest that, “ongoing research about such opportunities may prove helpful for future recommendations offered by leaders in the profession, as well as in discussions about possible revisions to opportunity standards such as those published by MENC” (pp. 62-63). This supports, in part, the need for this study.

**Method Books**

There was little disagreement among the panelists regarding method books, which was the subject of the fourth section of the Round 1 survey. Most felt that the books that are available today are excellent and offer enough variety. They also felt that current method books are quite thorough, for the most part, in covering the content required in a first-year string class. In addition, they felt that both the quality and quantity of method books and string pieces have improved greatly in recent years.

However, they also agreed, unanimously, that the 4th finger should be introduced to violin and viola students and that all four strings should be utilized in the first-year string class. Not all method books offer this.

Again, the responses on this topic were greatly varied. One panelist stated, “Books are good to encourage reading, but many of the first-year [skills] can be taught without a book.” A second felt that, “Any teacher worth their salt will have their own good ideas to employ in the first year. But, the current commercial books, with all their additional resources, are excellent – given the typical heterogeneous public school situation.” And finally, a third panelist reported that, “I think one method book plus [the] teacher [being] prepared, works best.”
All the responses indicated that the first-year string teacher is the most important factor in the use of any method book. It might be interesting to conduct a study in which a teacher, with excellent first-year string teaching capabilities, taught one year with one method book and another year with a different book to ascertain if the teacher perceived a difference in class achievement. Of course, the variables of each of the two classes would need to be controlled.

Performances

The fifth section of Round 1 asked questions about performances in the first-year string class. There was consensus on Q/S 40 in which all panelists agreed that it is Not Suitable and Less Suitable for a first-year string class not to have a public performance. In the subsequent rounds, it was determined, by consensus, that first-year string classes should perform at least two times during the first year, and that the first public performances should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, a beautiful tone on open strings, and the ability to play well a few simple tunes. One panelist cautioned, however, that, “It is not desirable to spend all of instruction time on performance music. The first year should be mostly about setting up good habits.” Another suggested that, “Performing for others as soon as correct posture and a good tone can be demonstrated…provides confidence and a sense of accomplishment that will encourage further progress.”

Often, the anecdotal cry and hue among some instrumental teachers is that they feel compelled to teach a curriculum that is performance based. However, the expert panelists in this survey indicated that, while it essential that there be performances by the first-year string class, the performance should reflect the efforts that are made to instill
the foundational skills of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold/bowing motion, a beautiful tone, and good intonation. Perhaps some first-year string teachers need to be more cognizant of these foundational skills. Parents and administrators will always appreciate a performance that exhibits these qualities. To that end, what can be wrong with teaching string skills through performance pieces?

**Additional Topics**

The sixth, and final, section of the Round 1 survey, included additional topics for a group of eleven questions/statements. Several of these topics have been discussed, to some degree, in previous sections.

**Improvisation**

With the topic of improvisation, the question asked in Round 1 was: Should improvisation be an integral part of the first-year string class? Although consensus was not attained, the majority (70%) felt that improvisation should be included in the first-year string class. In Round 2, the question was asked again with the same response mode (Yes, No), and consensus was reached (84%). It seems that some panelists were influenced by the written responses in Round 1 and changed their mind. In any case, after reading the responses in both Rounds 1 and 2, it still seemed to me that there was not a clear understanding or knowledge, on the part of the panelists, of how to implement improvisation in the first-year string class.

To find out if this was the case, the panelists were asked, in Round 3, to briefly describe how they would introduce improvisation to a first-year string class. The responses were quite interesting and demonstrated, to me at least, that the panelists actually do have some understanding of what improvisation is and how to use it in the
first-year string classroom setting. The exercise of call and response was mentioned the most frequently. However, this is still an area for which more research would be beneficial, since it appears that a deeper understanding and knowledge of improvisation is needed by string teachers so that they can more adequately and easily employ successful improvisation sequencing.

**Ideal Teacher Attributes**

The topic of ideal teacher attributes engendered lively debate among the panelists. In Round 1 they were asked to list attributes of the ideal teacher of a first-year string class. Patience, enthusiasm, high energy, passion, sense of humor, good musicianship, competency as a string player, and the ability to pick out appropriate music for programs were among the attributes mentioned the most often in Round 1. I placed ten of these attributes and placed them on a grid for ranking in Round 2, Q/S 70 (see Appendix Q).

The panelists were asked to rank these attributes in order of importance. However, half the panelists used a rating system rather than the ranking system that was requested. Nevertheless, I attempted to construct one question/statement, in Round 3, that narrowed the number of teacher attributes, based on panelist responses, hoping to attain consensus. Consensus was not reached with the following statement: the two most important attributes (among others) of a first-year string teacher are, 1) is able to pace a lesson appropriately and, 2) has a sense of humor. Actually, several panelists expressed dissatisfaction with these choices, particularly the one about having a sense of humor.

Hindsight suggests this might have been an inaccurate selection of attributes chosen from the panelists’ Round 1 responses. Or, maybe this merely indicates, once again, that many attributes are required of the successful first-year string teacher and that
it is not possible to adequately narrow the choices to a few. Reflecting on this, I believe it
would have been better to prepare a list of all the attributes listed by the panelists, and
then to ask the panelists to indicate their acceptance or non-acceptance of the entire list.
Or, perhaps it might have been more effective to ask them to choose, from a list, the five
most important teacher attributes (in their opinions).

While there is literature that discusses various aspects of teaching effectiveness
(Hamann, Lineburgh & Paul, 1998; Yarbrough & Price, 1981), there is less information
on the desirable attributes of the successful teacher of elementary age, first-year string
classes. Therefore, this study provides a beginning for study in this area.

Components for Success in the First-Year String Classroom

In Round 3, there was strong consensus (100%) that the two most important
components for success in the first-year string classroom are, 1) a teacher who is
qualified, persistent, enthusiastic, and well trained, and 2) adequate class time and space.
Perhaps the method I used to salvage a poorly designed ranking item (Q/S 68) in Round
1, which addressed teacher attributes, was faulty. Nevertheless, it was evident, in each of
the three rounds of the survey, that the panelists felt strongly that the first-year string
teacher must be well trained and possess certain attributes. In addition, when they were
asked what steps should be taken to improve first-year string classes, most of the
responses were directed toward improving teacher training. One panelist suggested that
improvement of first-year string classes should also include the matter of refining “how
to teach the basics.” Again, this is a reference to teacher training. Throughout all three
rounds of the survey, panelists stressed the importance of teacher training at the
university level.


Teacher Training

One of the most important issues, for discussion, is the establishment of uniform standards and requirements for preservice teacher training at the university level. The experts in this study expressed, again and again, that the expertise and quality of the first-year string teacher is the most critical component of a successful first-year string class.

In a revealing early document, MENC’s The String Instruction Program in Music Education of 1957, the recommendations for “improvement of teacher-training curricula in strings” were stated as follows:

Curriculum for Music Education Majors – Instrumental Emphasis

1. At least two years of string class work
   a. One year on violin or viola, and one year on cello or bass…
   b. This class to be taught as outlined for vocal emphasis students.
2. If possible, a third year of string class work in which the student could alternate between assisting the teacher of the class and additional work on any string instrument where extra experience is desirable.
3. At least two years (preferably three) of applied instruction on string instruments, with particular emphasis on violin as first choice, and cello as second.
4. At least two semesters (preferably four) of music education orchestra experience on a string instrument, playing materials of value most suited for public school use.
5. At least two semesters (preferably four) of string ensemble using materials at the student’s level which would have greatest educational value and which would applicable to public school use. It is further suggested that the student play the instrument with which he has up to this time had the least experience.
6. At least one course (preferably two) in orchestral methods, which would also include the information specified for students of vocal emphasis.
7. At least one course (preferably two) in student teaching, a portion of which should be devoted to string class and orchestra work with children in the laboratory or the local public schools.
8. Additional suggestions:
   a. All string classes of like level (unless they become too large) should be programmed together regardless of emphasis.
b. All instrumental teachers sent into the public schools should play a string instrument (preferably violin or cello) with some degree of proficiency.

c. Supervised student teaching is very necessary and all college students who intend to become teachers should be urged to have some experience with strings and orchestra in their student teaching assignments.

And, for music education majors, training as string specialists, the curriculum is even more rigorous than that above. For string [performance] majors the curriculum is as follows:

1. At least one year (preferably more) of string class work with music education students on an instrument (or instruments) other than his major.
2. At least one semester (preferably more) of applied study on a string instrument of an opposite type than his major.
3. At least one course in orchestra methods with music education students.
4. At least one semester (preferably on his secondary string instrument) on music education string ensemble materials.
5. At least one semester of student teaching, all of which would be devoted to string class and orchestra work in a laboratory or public school situation (ibid.).

One can wonder why there seems to be major discrepancy with the above curricula and with current university string teacher training. Smith (1995a), in a study titled, *The Status of Undergraduate String Education in American Colleges and Universities*, confirms that there is discrepancy in a study that sought to determine,

What types of string teacher education courses are included in undergraduate music education curriculums? What content is included in these courses? How does string teacher education vary in different regions of the United States? How well are undergraduate music education students being prepared to function as public school string teachers? (p. 139).
In her study, she found that the schools in the North Central Division (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) had:

…the greatest number of separate string techniques and string methods courses for all undergraduate music education students…the most contact hours per week per course…[and] the greatest number of string specialists teaching the string techniques and string methods courses (p. 153).

However, Smith (1995b) concludes that,

Perhaps the most disturbing finding of this study is that many schools in the sample require only a one-semester combined string techniques/methods course for undergraduate music education students. As band and choral directors may also teach orchestra and string classes in addition to their own areas of specialization, further string preparation appears warranted (p. 75).

Although there are many administrative reasons why the recommendations of the MENC (1957) document have not been implemented fully, why is there such an apparent gap? Are these recommendations too demanding? Are any efforts being made to address this discrepancy? If so, by whom? In my opinion, these recommendations appear to be based on correct reasoning.

In addition, she underscores the fact that, “many band directors are increasingly being asked to teach orchestra and string classes in addition to their own area of specialization. In light of this reality, the preparation of such students becomes increasingly critical” (p. 154).

The Non-String Player as a First-Year String Teacher

This brings us to an important issue related to teacher training: The non-string player who teaches strings, especially a first-year class. The Round 1 question that was posed was: Even with a shortage of string teachers in the U.S., should teachers whose
primary instrument is not a string instrument be hired to teach first-year string players?
The panelists in this survey voiced strong opinions. Statements ranged from, “NO!!” to
“wind brass percussion majors are doing a stunning job…without these colleagues
teaching beginning strings, we will never reach as many students as we should.”

Most of the panelists’ comments, however, expressed more equitable sentiments
and their responses were in alignment with the following statement: “Certainly, if they
know what they’re doing – [it] shouldn’t be a problem if #55 is in place, at least on the
university level.” (Q/S 55 asked whether there should be minimum standards and
requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string
classes).

This is a difficult issue to discuss since there are not enough string specialists to
fill all the string positions in the U.S. today. The questions that need to be asked are:
1) What needs to be done to fill empty positions with string specialists and, 2) What can
be done to prepare non-string specialists to adequately serve in a first-year string class
position?

_The Status of First-Year String Programs in the U.S. Today_

With another issue, the panelists felt that, in general, the status of first-year string
programs in the U.S. is improving. However, this was qualified with concern that
improvement must still continue in the following areas: teacher training, rote teaching,
ear training, teaching rhythmic skills, and “creating environments suitable to teach the
instruments, including time, location, etc.”

129
In 1997, an ASTA symposium was convened to set standards for successful school string/orchestra teaching. The results, from the efforts of many string education professionals, were published in a manual titled, *Standards For the Preparation of School String and Orchestra Teachers*, are clearly stated and organized for three levels: musician, educator, and professional.

Therefore, another conclusion, as a result of this study, is a recommendation that ASTA reconvene a group similar to the 1997 group. This new group could, perhaps, produce an agreed upon list of goals, objectives, and strategies that would yield a more standard approach to a successful first-year string class.

*Ear Training*

There was 95% agreement among the panelists that ear training should be part of the overall focus in the first-year string instrument classroom at the elementary level. In Round 3, the panelists were asked to define what ear training in first-year classes meant to them (Q/S 4) since consensus had not been reached on this subject in the previous round. Most panelists responded with statements similar to the following: “Call and response kinds of activities, pitch matching, and listening and responding.”

Gordon (1993) does not specifically list ear training in his book about learning sequences. However, he goes into great detail about “introducing the first level of skill learning sequence. At that level, which is aural/oral, students begin to receive formal instruction on listening and performing music through audiation” (p. 52). Thus, string teachers should become more aware and knowledgeable in this area. An understanding of the principles of audiation and learning sequences would give the teacher, especially of
first-year string students, foundational knowledge that is needed to build a philosophy about teaching music, as well as an adequate sequential approach to string teaching.

Emphasis in the First-Year String Class

Question/Statement 11 reached consensus in Round 3. It was stated as follows:

Please rate (1=first choice, 2=second choice, or 3=third choice) the statements below: 1) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on teaching basic skills (such as instrument position, posture, bow hold/stroke, left-hand shape), 2) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on playing simple melodies and, 3) The emphasis in first-year string classes should be equally placed on skill development and learning simple melodies.

The responses were uneven. However, the most prevalent choice was for the first statement (the emphasis should be on teaching basic skills), with 65% of the panelists selecting this statement as first choice and 30% selecting it as second choice for a combined total of 95%. The second most prevalent choice was for the third statement (emphasis should be equally on skill development and learning simple melodies), with 35% of the panelists selecting this statement as first choice and 45% of the panelists selecting it as second choice for a combined total of 80%.

I found this surprising, since I thought there might be stronger consensus on the third option (equal emphasis on skill development and learning simple melodies) because of written responses in previous rounds. I conclude from this that the panelists felt that the primary emphasis in the first-year string class should be on skill development.
Is it Ever Too Late to Begin Playing a String Instrument?

In Round 2, the panelists were asked: Is ever too late to begin playing a string instrument in a class setting? This question (Q/S 13) was included because of several responses made in Round 1 (regarding the issue of the ideal age to begin taking a string instrument in a class setting.) Consensus was not attained. The responses included the following: 1) “What is too late?” 2) Although the younger the better, it is never too late to start. I have had much success with students who have started as late as eighth and ninth grade”; and, 3) Generally, but this is a relative thing.”

Perhaps this was not a clearly worded question/statement. Certainly many string teachers can cite examples of experiences with students who began string instrument instruction at a later age and who succeeded. However, there is a practical question and a philosophical question to be asked. The practical one is: In the public school setting, is there an age that you feel is too late to begin a student on a string instrument? Why? The philosophical question is: Is it ever too late to begin to play a string instrument? Why?

Role of Community Schools

The role of Community Schools, as a first-year string teaching location, was addressed in Round 1 (Q/S 5). Although the panelists attained consensus on this question, in the Suitable-More Suitable range, I wanted to know more about the panelists’ thoughts regarding the role of community schools. Some pedagogues, such as Yarbrough (2000), predict that community schools will become more important to music education in the future by offering partnership possibilities. So, in Round 3 Question/Statement 14 was
included: Briefly describe what you think would be an ideal relationship between a public school and a community school. The panelists’ responses included the following:

1) Share ideas; perform together of for one another. Work toward common goal to grow string playing in the community.

2) Community schools [would] provide enrichment opportunities like chamber music, studio/jazz orchestra, highly selective chamber orchestras, and 100% scholarship [supported] private lessons for recommended, school-selected students.

3) To develop a “partnership” of all the resources that can provide for the young children is best. This may mean that each entity (school, community, private) may have to identify their strengths and then work with the others to make the best possible situation for the students.

4) Public school programs start large numbers of beginners (representing a balanced instrumentation) helping to identify students with particular interest, talent or ability to focus and work hard. Community schools can follow with lessons for those students who wish to move beyond what the school situation can offer. Community schools should NOT recruit students in conflict with school music activities, nor should a student be led (by example) to be critical or snobbish about public school programs. Ideally each offers something the other can’t: the schools start huge numbers of students with BALANCED instruction (violas, basses) and the community schools can offer studio teaching at a level & depth most public schools cannot. Both need each other & these should never compete, nor need to compete.

Finally, there were several issues that were brought before the panelists that were not directly related to the overall focus of this study. Since the experts were convened, however, I wanted to take the opportunity to find out what their opinions were on other issues that were marginally, at least, contingent to the successful teaching of first-year string classes as a basis for further research.

It may be concluded that the panelists’ thoughts are in agreement with those of Yarbrough.
General Music Instruction

The topic of general music class instruction for elementary children was placed before the panelists because it is germane to string instruction. Most of the panelists agreed that having a good general music program in an elementary school system is important. One panelist, in response to a question that asked whether a string student should be required to have 1-2 years of general music before receiving instrument instruction, answered that, “Yes, they should and parents and the music faculty at the school should lobby for it – these foundational skills are ESSENTIAL and make the learning of an instrument so much easier...” Interestingly, another panelist made a somewhat internally contradictory statement: “My experience has always been with students having a solid general music background. However, I don’t believe it is necessary to the first-year string student.”

The panelists reached consensus on the issue of the importance of the need for all young children to have the opportunity to have general music classes, taught by qualified music specialists, during their elementary school years. This might indicate a willingness, on the part of string specialists, to expand their view, to look at the larger picture of music education in the public schools.

Chapter Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the findings in this study indicate that, overall, the teacher is the single most important component of a successful first-year string class at the elementary level. In addition, it is clear that many of the other issues that attained consensus are dependent on the quality of the teacher.
While the intent of this study was to identify issues, not to address them, it must be noted that the panelists agreed that a successful first-year string teacher is:

1) A well-trained teacher who is competent on each of the four string instruments
2) A teacher who is able to deliver appropriate and adequate skill content
3) A teacher who has the qualities of enthusiasm, persistence, patience, and being prepared, among many others

The second most important issue that is foundational to the success of first-year string classes, as stated by the panel of experts, are the following structural components:

1) A classroom that has adequate space
2) A schedule that permits adequate time for teaching
3) Support from administration, colleagues, and community

In order to begin to acknowledge and work on these issues, the following efforts need to be made:

1) Encourage collaboration among higher education institutions (NASM) regarding string teacher training
2) Establish minimum standards for string teacher education that will truly produce a well-trained string teacher
3) Find ways to inform school administrations about the needs of the first-year string class
4) Find more and better ways to include in-service teachers in ongoing discussion about the components and skills that are foundational to a successful first-year string class, so that their experience and ideas are included in decision making that affects the string profession
In addition, in-service teachers need to know about the latest research and ideas regarding their profession. Apropos to this, the experts in this study agreed that ASTA should be the primary vehicle for disseminating information and research findings to string teachers at all levels. It is also recommended that all string teachers need to become involved in their local and state organizations in order to keep abreast of the latest issues confronting the profession.

String teachers need to review and reflect on the information presented in this study. Although many might not agree with these findings, either philosophically or practically, it is hoped that the information presented in this study will enable and encourage string teachers, at all levels of experience, to look at the criteria that the experts in this study identified as necessary for success in a first-year elementary string classroom.

Further, if a teacher has doubts about a particular finding, it is recommended that he/she, at the very least, apply it and determine if it yields better results. Of course, it takes intellectual honesty to be able to discern whether something new works or not.

Also, on a different topic, string teachers need to recognize that they are members of a group of highly unique individuals. String educators, teachers, and performers do not conform to a specific standard or way of doing things. Therefore, in this regard, they need to actively seek to increase their own knowledge of the many excellent approaches to string teaching in the classroom that are available.

A final observation about the findings of this study: it would seem that the old axiom, there are many routes to Rome, holds true in the string profession. This study confirms that there are many ways to approach the successful teaching of a string
instrument. Healthy arguments abound among string teaching professionals regarding the various approaches. However, it is also true that certain components, such as a well-trained and capable teacher, cannot be substituted. The well-trained and capable teacher provides the only route to a successful first-year string class at the elementary level.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

From the findings of this study, the need for further research is apparent. Examples include:

1) Ear training: what is the depth of knowledge for most string teachers of first-year string classes? What kind of training is given to pre-service teachers in this area? Do string specialists understand the term audiation? Do string teachers know about and understand the learning sequences suggested by Gordon (1975) that relate to this subject?

2) Heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping of first-year string classes: is it a matter of preference, experience, and expertise? Does one grouping work better than others for the first-year string class?

3) The standards have been set by ASTA for the pre-service string teacher at the university level. Does there need to be a restructuring of the courses at the university level to insure acquisition of these standards? How would these standards be assessed? Clearly, dialog needs to continue within the National Association for Schools of Music (NASM). Should some sort of screening be established for hiring string teachers who are not trained in a university setting?
4) How can training be improved for pre-service and service teachers who will or are teaching first-year string classes and for whom a string instrument is not their primary instrument? Perhaps the research questions need to be: 1) how high do the standards need to be and, 2) what specific minimum requirements need to be included in preservice teacher training for the individual who wants to be a first-year string class teacher and whose primary instrument is not a string instrument?

5) What teacher attributes are the most important for success in the first-year string class? More research needs to be done on specific attributes. Some attributes for string teachers have been suggested. However, there has been no attempt to find out if there is a need to differentiate between desirable attributes at different grade levels. In addition, there need to be replications of research already done in this area.

6) The variables of age, class size, class frequency, class length, and class grouping (heterogeneous/homogeneous) need more scrutiny. Perhaps string teachers do not have enough time to reflect on or discuss these issues. Which variable combinations work best? Or, are teacher preference and teacher expertise the best determinants?

7) Is there a specific age that is best for beginning a string instrument in a class setting? If so, what determines this?
APPENDIX A

PANEL OF EXPERTS

Melissa Allen
Arlene Bennett
Louis Bergonzi, Ph.D.
Muriel Bodley
Julie Carr
John Cicchitto
Andrew Dabczynski, Ph.D.
Sandra Dackow, Ph.D.
Michael Davis
William Dick
Kathryn Drydyk
Robert Frost, Ph.D.
Doris Gazda
James Kjelland, Ph.D.
Lyn McClain
Ronald Mutchnik
Alberta Schneider
Mary Wagner
Anne Witt, Ph.D.
APPENDIX B

E-MAIL SCRIPT INVITATION TO PANEL MEMBERS

Dear __________:

I am inviting you to participate in a research study designed to find consensus among experts on issues germane to teaching a first-year string class. This study will be conducted by me as partial fulfillment of the requirements for receiving my Ph.D. at The Ohio State University and is under the direction of Dr. Robert Gillespie, my advisor.

The modified Delphi technique will be used and is designed to create agreement among experts and is based on the principle that “two heads are better than one.” Anonymity between the panel members is important in order to safeguard domination by any person(s) and to allow freedom of expression for all. Although the researcher will know the identity of the panelists, all responses will be kept confidential.

Panelists will discuss, via a web-based survey instrument called Zoomerang, what they feel are the necessary components of an ideal first-year string classroom. Three categories of participants will make up the panel: expert pedagogue, expert classroom practitioner, and expert private studio teacher/performer. About 25 participants will be drawn from across the nation.

There will be three rounds of participation with each round taking approximately 35 minutes. The time frame for participation is as follows:

- February 2, 2004 – Round I
- February 16, 2004 – Round II
- March 1, 2004 – Round III

You will have about one week to respond to each round. This will allow for participant’s varying schedules. It is imperative that all participants have web access and that all participants make an upfront commitment to complete all three rounds.

All responses will be kept confidential. However, you will be able to access the website anonymously by using your assigned code name or by using your real identity. Details will be provided soon to those who agree to participate.

If you agree to become a panel member for this modified Delphi survey, you will be notified by me, via e-mail, of three things: 1) of your acceptance into the study; 2) given more information regarding the process that will be used; and, 3) receive a consent form that may be signed via e-mail. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact me at: schulte.60@osu.edu or at (614) 459-4894 (leave a message and give me your evening phone # and I will return your call).

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Erika Schulte
Ph.D. Candidate
The Ohio State University
December 10, 2003

Dear State Music Supervisor:

Your assistance is requested to nominate two of the best teachers of first-year string programs in your state to serve on a panel of experts that will work to come to consensus on some of the components of the ideal first-year string class. A nomination sheet is attached.

To be nominated for the panel, the following criteria are to be used: The nominee

1) Will have at least two years experience in teaching first-year string players
2) Will have demonstrated competence as judged by you, or by their administrators, and/or their peers.

The purpose of this study is to identify the various components that are necessary for success in the first-year string program. Participants will be asked to complete, anonymously, three separate, 35-minute, rounds on a web-based survey program. All rounds will be completed on-line, so nominees will not have to travel and will not have any financial expenses related to their participation. It means that each panelist must have access to the web. The panel of 30 will be selected from persons who have a strong interest in adding to our knowledge of teaching first-year string players.

If you would like a copy of an executive summary of this study when it is completed, please indicate by checking the box on the nomination form and returning it to me. This research is part of my doctoral dissertation being conducted at The Ohio State University.

Please complete the attached nomination form and return in the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope by December 22, 2003. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Erika Schulte
Ph.D. Candidate
The Ohio State University
110 Weigel Hall
Columbus, OH 43210
Schulte.60@osu.edu
APPENDIX D

NOMINATION FORM

Please return by December 22, 2003 to schulte.60@osu.edu

Name of nominator: _________________________________________________

State: _____________________________

Yes, I would like to receive an executive summary of this research study

☐

Nominee: _________________________________________________________

Position: __________________________________________________________

Email address: _____________________________________________________

Phone #: __________________________________________________________

Justification for nomination (50 words or less):

Nominee: _________________________________________________________

Position: __________________________________________________________

Email address: _____________________________________________________

Phone #: __________________________________________________________

Justification for nomination (50 words or less):
Hello!

You were nominated by your State Music Supervisor to participate in a special modified Delphi technique research study. This study will be conducted by me as partial fulfillment of the requirements for receiving my Ph.D. at The Ohio State University and will be under the direction of Dr. Robert Gillespie, my advisor.

The purpose of this study is for panel members to come to consensus on issues germane to teaching a first-year classroom string class. The Delphi technique is designed to create agreement among experts and is based on the principle that “two heads are better than one.” Anonymity between the panel members is important in order to safeguard domination by any person(s) and to allow freedom of expression for all. While the researchers will know the identity of the panelists, all responses will be kept confidential.

There are three categories of participants: expert pedagogue, expert classroom practitioner, and expert private studio teacher/performer. Panelists will “discuss,” via a web-based survey instrument called Zoomerang, what they feel are the necessary components of an ideal first-year string classroom. Thirty participants are being drawn from across the nation.

Nominations for expert classroom practitioners were based on expertise in first-year string teaching with the following criteria: 1) will have at least two years experience in teaching first-year string players; 2) will have demonstrated competence as judged by their administrators and by their peers.

There will be three rounds of participation with each round taking approximately 35 minutes. The time frame for participation is projected as follows:

- February 2, 2004 – Round I
- February 16, 2004 – Round II
- March 1, 2004 – Round III
It is imperative that all participants have access to the web and that all participants make an upfront commitment to complete all three rounds.

All responses will be confidential. However, you will be able to access the website anonymously by using your assigned code name or by using your real identity. Details will be provided to those who agree to participate.

If you agree to become one of the panel of experts for this modified Delphi survey, you will be notified by me, via e-mail, 1) of your acceptance into the study, 2) given more information regarding the process that will be used, and 3) receive a consent form that may be signed via e-mail. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact me at: schulte.60@osu.edu or at (614) 459-4894 (leave a message with your evening phone # and I will return your call).

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Erika Schulte
Ph.D. Candidate
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX F

E-MAIL SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS TO PANEL MEMBERS

Dear ____________:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of the “Best of the Best” panel that will identify, through the process of consensus, the components that the panelists feel are necessary for a successful first-year string class. Your commitment to complete all three rounds is much appreciated. This research project is being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Ph.D. degree at The Ohio State University. It will be part of my dissertation.

A web-based survey program called Zoomerang will deploy the modified Delphi technique, a method used to gain consensus anonymously from experts in three rounds. To participate, your ability to access the internet is essential since all correspondence will be on line.

The first round of the survey is posted on the web site and this link <             > will take you to the instrument through which you will respond to a number of statements. The steps/suggestions listed below will assist you to complete your survey correctly:

1) There are three types of responses in the survey: 1) Not Suitable – Most Suitable; 2) Yes/No; and, 3) Written out short statements/comments.

2) You are permitted to use the same response more than once.

3) Some statements are grouped. At the end of each group you will be given the opportunity to make additional comments about items in that group and to make suggestions for items to be included in the next round. All written comments will be summarized and included anonymously for review in the following round.

4) Individual results are confidential and a code name will be used to share individual comments in the feedback process. When a response is left intact (not summarized or synthesized into the whole), the code name will be attached. This will enable participants to follow the train of thought, from the first round through the third, of a particular individual without identifying that person.
Please complete Round I of the survey by February 8, 2004. Prompt returns will enable me to compile the results for the next round in manner worthy of such a quality panel, and to maintain the time schedule that was agreed upon by all participants.

I will be contacting you in a few days to be sure you are able to link up to the survey and that you are able to respond to it on line. I will also be glad to answer any questions you might have at that time. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached at (614) 459-4894 or schulte.60@osu.edu.

Once again, I am grateful for your participation in this study.

Erika Schulte
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX G

INSTRUCTIONS TO PILOT SURVEY TAKERS

Dear__________:

I have had a few setbacks in "launching" my pilot survey, so this is coming to you later than I had hoped. However, it is now accessible. You will receive an e-mail from Zoomerang. Below are the instructions. These are the same as the ones that will be sent to the regular panelists in January, so please let me know what is not clear. You will only be doing Round 1, so some of the instructions are not pertinent to you. The response deadline for the pilot survey is Tuesday, December 23. Let me know if this will NOT work for you!

The modified Delphi technique, a method used to gain consensus anonymously from experts in three rounds, will be deployed by a web-based survey program called Zoomerang. To participate, your ability to access the internet is essential since all correspondence will be on line.

The first round of the survey is posted on the web site and this link < > will take you to the instrument through which you will respond to a number of statements. The steps listed below will assist you to complete your survey correctly:

1) There are three types of responses in the survey: 1) Not Suitable - Most Suitable; 2) Yes/No; and 3) Open-ended Response.
2) You are permitted to use the same response more than once in the Not Suitable-Most.
3) Please keep responses short.
4) Some statements are grouped. At the end of each group you will be given the opportunity to make additional comments about items in that group and to make suggestions for items to be included in the next round. All written comments will be summarized and included anonymously for review in the following round.
5) Individual results are confidential and a code name will be used to share individual comments in the feedback process. When a response is left intact (not summarized or synthesized into the whole), the code name will be attached. This will enable participants to follow the train of thought, from the first round through the third, of a particular individual without identifying that person.
6) After you answer one page, click SUBMIT. You will not be able to go back to it later.
7) There are a total of 32 questions/statements. The last five are open-ended response - they will take more time.

Please complete Round I of the survey by January 24, 2004. Prompt returns will enable me to compile the results for the next round in manner worthy of such a quality panel, and to maintain the time schedule that was agreed upon by all participants.
I will be contacting you in a few days to be sure you are able to link up to the survey and that you are able to respond to it online. I will also be glad to answer any questions you might have at that time. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached at (614) 459-4894 or schulte.60@osu.edu.

Once again, I am grateful for your participation in this study.

Erika Schulte
APPENDIX H

E-MAIL INVITATION TO VALIDITY PANEL MEMBERS

Dr. __________:
Would you be willing to serve on a content and face validity panel for my dissertation research survey? It would entail an on-line reading of a web-based survey for clarity and content. Zoomerang is the on-line survey tool that I am using.

I have already run a pilot of the survey with 4 local string teachers and have subsequently made a few minor changes. The survey takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. You would only have to look at it, not respond to it; therefore it should take even less time. The responses I received from the pilot panel members about doing the survey on-line was very positive!

The subject being investigated is: What are the components of an ideal first-year string class? I will be using the modified Delphi technique to establish consensus among an expert panel of 25-30 pedagogues, practitioners, and performer/teachers.

I am asking you, Dr. Conable, and Dr. Robinson to serve on this validity panel. The time frame will be:

**Wednesday, 01/21 - Monday, 01/26**

I will send the survey via e-mail on Wednesday, January 21st. You will have until Monday, January 26 to respond with concerns/comments and recommended changes.

Please let me know if you are willing and able to do this. Thanks!
Erika Schulte
APPENDIX I

ROUND 1 SURVEY GREETING

A survey of expert opinion regarding the components of the ideal first-year string instrument classroom for young people

There are 59 questions/statements in this survey. A few are simple Yes/No questions. The majority are statements for which you will decide the degree of suitability for the ideal first-year string class for young people. And, with some questions/statements, you will write out your response. All responses should be short and concise. Participants are anonymous to each other and all responses will be kept confidential by the researcher.

"Ideal" will be defined here as: a standard of excellence. You will need to suspend, for the purpose of this survey, reality to some degree. "Reality" consists of those everyday situations or entities that may restrict our ability to do that which we feel is ideal.

After you complete a page, you will submit it. This means that you will not be able to go back and edit your responses.

Enjoy! Thank you for taking part in this survey!

START SURVEY!
APPENDIX J

ROUND I SURVEY THANK YOU

THANK YOU VERY MUCH! You will be sent instructions for Round II in about a week.
Dear __________:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the modified-Delphi technique panel. The purpose of the panel is to come to consensus on some selected components associated with the first-year of string classroom instruction. You have been selected as representative of the “best of the best” in the field of string education. Your commitment to complete all three rounds is much appreciated. This research project is being conducted for my dissertation as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree at The Ohio State University.

There are three areas from which selection for the panel of 23 was made:

1) Pedagogues who have conducted research, taught, and/or have written/lectured on the subject of string education, especially the beginning string class

2) Practitioners of first-year string teaching who have a proven track record of excellence as noted by their administrators, peers, and community

3) Well-known private studio teachers/performers with somewhat the same criteria as the practitioner, with the addition that they are frequent public performers for paying audiences

A web-based survey program called Zoomerang will deploy the modified Delphi technique, a method used to gain consensus anonymously from experts in three rounds. Round 1 of the survey will be sent out late on Monday February 2, 2004. To participate, your ability to access the inter-net is essential since all correspondence will be on line.

I want to stress, immediately, that you are being asked to think and speak creatively and freely! No one serving on the panel knows the identity of any other panel member. To get the “conversation” started, Round 1 of the survey will present various subjects to be evaluated and discussed. However, you are also being encouraged to contribute any additional pertinent ideas/comments that you wish in the “additional comments” boxes. If you feel that certain concerns or issues need to be placed on the table for discussion and evaluation, please do so. These will then be summarized and placed before the panel in Round 2. This same process will be repeated one more time for Round 3. Each time consensus is reached on a topic it will be noted. You will always know exactly where the panel stands on any issue because you will be able to access the results at anytime by using your assigned code (it will be assigned when you access the survey).

Those panelists whose responses are outside the group consensus in Round 1 will be asked to think through their response again and either change their response to match the consensus group or defend their response in written form, briefly in Round 2. The other panelists will read the defense and will then decide whether to change their response or not in Round 3.
Consensus will be established when 80% of the panel members (n18) are in agreement within two neighboring responses. For example, with Likert-type responses that are used in this survey - Not Suitable, Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable, and Most Suitable - if 18 or more panel members select Suitable and More Suitable, consensus has been reached. In a Yes and No response selection: if 18 panel members select one or the other, consensus has been reached. Once consensus has been achieved that question/statement will be removed from further consideration.

The first round of the survey will be posted on a web site and a link will take you to the instrument through which you will respond to 58 questions/statements. The steps listed below will assist you to complete your survey correctly:

1) There are three types of responses in the survey: 1) Not Suitable Most Suitable; 2) Yes/No; and 3) Open-ended response.

2) You are permitted to use the same response more than once in the list of “Suitables”.

3) Some statements are grouped into eight sections. At the end of each section you will be given the opportunity to make additional comments about items in that group and to make suggestions for items to be included in the next round. All written comments will be summarized and some will be included anonymously for review in the following round.

4) All responses should be kept short and concise. You do not have to use complete sentences!

5) The researcher is the only one who will know the identity of each respondent and will keep this information confidential.

Please complete Round I of the survey by February 9, 2004. Prompt returns will enable me to compile the results for the next round in manner worthy of such a quality panel, and to maintain the time schedule that was agreed upon by all participants.

I will be contacting you a day or two after the first round is launched, on February 2, to be sure you have received the survey and are able to link up to it. I will be happy to answer any concerns you might have at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or problems. I can be reached at (614) 459-4894, erikas@chaosmail.com, or schulte.60@osu.edu.

Once again, I am grateful for your participation in this study. I hope this will be as interesting to you as it has been for me! Thank you.

Erika Schulte
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX L

ROUND 2 SURVEY GREETING

A modified Delphi survey of expert opinion regarding the components of the ideal first-year string instrument classroom for young people

Greetings, again, expert panelists. In Round 2 there are 76 questions/statements. The format is somewhat different: you will respond to 39 YES and NO questions/statements, 20 Less Suitable-More Suitable, and 4 in which you will rank order 8-10 statements. The remaining 13 are places for additional comments.

This Round is meant to refine the questions/statements in Round 1 as well as include for "discussion" the additional comments that were made. Hopefully, each of you has looked at the responses to Round 1. While the point of this survey is to come to consensus, if any one feels strongly about a position that they are taking, please do so! However, I ask that you state your position so that others may possibly be persuaded.

Again, "IDEAL" will be defined here as: a standard of excellence. You will need to suspend, for the purpose of this survey, reality to some degree. "Reality" consists of those everyday situations or entities that may restrict our ability to do that which we feel is ideal.

After you complete a page, you will submit it. This means that you will NOT be able to go back and edit your responses.

Please be as direct and open as you are comfortable being. Thank you for taking part in this survey!

START SURVEY!
APPENDIX M

ROUND 2 SURVEY THANK YOU

THANK YOU VERY MUCH! You will be sent instructions for Round III in about two weeks.
APPENDIX N

ROUND 3 SURVEY GREETING

A modified Delphi survey of expert opinion regarding the components of the ideal first-year string instrument classroom for young people

A final greeting, expert panelists! Round 3 is much shorter since there were many items in Round 2 for which consensus was reached. This round is a further refinement. Please read the comments from Round 2 before commencing with Round 3. I am very grateful to each one of you for participating in this study. You will each receive a copy of the summary report when it is completed, if you so desire (see last question). Thank you. Erika Schulte
APPENDIX O

ROUND 3 SURVEY THANK YOU

My thanks to you are very heartfelt. Without you I could not have completed this study. I will contact each of you, once all the results are in, to be sure you have the URL to look at the responses/comments for Round 3. You were a wonderful expert panel!
Erika Schulte
APPENDIX P

ROUND 1 SURVEY INSTRUMENT WRITTEN RESULTS

Question 1: From your perspective, are you satisfied, IN GENERAL, with the way first-year string classes for young people are taught in the United States?

01. No
02. Yes
03. No. Many string students are not taught by string specialists. This is a severe hindrance to their progress.
04. No
05. Yes. There is much fine teaching happening. There are also many obstacles such as limited time frame, inadequate facilities, non-string players as teachers, etc.
06. Yes
07. Yes
08. Yes. There probably should be more string players teaching string classes. Also, time restraints don’t always allow proper techniques.
09. No. Without any standards for class size, heterogeneous vs. homogeneous groups, age at which children start and learning to read music, it is hard to be satisfied with classes as they are. Standards for these areas need to be established so that teachers can have a reference point when discussing these issues with administrators.
10. No. Methodology is lacking in the majority of situations I have observed.
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes. I really do not have a complete picture of the whole U.S.
14. No. Too much reliance on reading and method books that stress what to play, not how to play.
15. No. Too hurried.
16. No. Usually not enough scheduled time; often taught by non-specialists; over-emphasis on reading rather than ear development; little teacher emphasis on comprehensive musicianship.
17. Yes. The way they are taught is OK. However, there are so few programs!
18. No. They start too late. The ideal time is 3rd grad, and now many (schools) who started in 4th grade have moved it up to 5th or even 6th grade.
19. No. There is still a wide variety of approaches (pullout vs. situated classes, single instruments vs. mixed classes; 5 times a week vs. once as 30 minute pullout) & no standardization has yet emerged.

20. No

Question 2: From your perspective, what do you feel are the current strengths of first-year classroom teaching in the United States today?

01. Ability to generate interest and desire to study an instrument; to offer community outreach concerts (senior citizen centers, e.g.) and tours/festivals/competitions to encourage retention in program and to some extent improve skill level and standard of playing.

02. Research into the psychology of teaching as well as the mechanics of playing the instrument have improved the overall level of teaching.

03. Starting students by ear – without the added dimension of reading music. Using modeling and lots of repetition. Having audio resources available for the student to reinforce the modeling. Some schools have a strong, consistent curriculum that encourages a strong foundation.

04. They want to be successful. Many are very proficient on their own instrument.

05. Excellent materials, well-trained teachers, motivated students.

06. Note reading, group dynamics and motivation.

07. Many higher quality materials have been published in recent years making teaching first year classes (particularly large classes) much easier.

08. Growing interest.

09. Dedicated teachers and materials that make their job easier. Awareness of the importance of including music in the curriculum. Personal performance level of teachers.

10. Recruiting techniques are more effective and the methods and materials available are greatly improved including ensemble collections, accompaniment recordings and administrative manuals.

11. The availability of excellent methods books and materials.

12. Excellent method books; teacher training is improving; more students learning strings.

13. In my situation the number of students that are getting the opportunity to receive lessons.

14. Much more material and real teaching pieces rather than transcriptions.

15. Recruiting efforts, developing a sense of program identity.

16. Growing numbers of involved students; excellent materials and instruments available; technology and other resources available.

17. The teachers do a great job. Interest in strings is growing.

18. This is very subjective. The quality of the teacher depends on the quality of the string education program they graduated from. E.g., quality of Ohio State, Michigan – outstanding!
19. The fact that even non-string player teachers seem (in some locations) to be getting results as good as string player teachers.

20. Essential Elements Method Book. The work ASTA is doing to train string teachers.

Question 3: From your perspective, what do you feel are the current weaknesses of first-year classroom string teaching in the United States today?

01. Failure to establish solid technical foundation (posture, basic habits of bow arm & left-hand technique) and beginning ear training; too much pressure put on getting a product (that is, any performance however mediocre) out there so that the string program can survive and justify its deserving to continue; low expectations, low standards for achievement and in many cases no curriculum or guidelines established to even offer a standard or expected achievement; and finally, compromised or limited skills and knowledge of graduates of music education programs in the instrument(s) they are expected to teach.

02. The weaknesses lie in the very concept of teaching strings to a group of people rather than dealing with each individual’s instincts.

03. Classes that are too large for individual attention, classes taught by non-string specialists who are unable to model a good tone and position, not enough string teachers!, inconsistent curricula that do not provide a firm foundation for beginning skills.

04. The ability to really teach a concept. Discipline; Violinists are not able to teach celli are very poor with bass skills.

05. Some teachers are not trained in stringed instruments, but are band or general music specialists who are given strings as part of their assignment.

06. Pitch discrimination, poor intonation, tone quality, proper holding instrument and bow.

07. Budget cuts (programs at risk of being cut), time (not having enough instruction time with first year groups).

08. Time.

09. Lack of teacher preparation in methods and materials of instruction. Class size is often too large (see #1). Adequate space in which to teach. Teachers carrying too large a teaching schedule.

10. Class teaching methodology lacks non-verbal approaches including manual assistance and supervised practicing. Instruction is inefficient due to “rehearsal” procedures which treat the group as an orchestra rather than a classroom.

11. Scheduling problems and consistency of instruction for the elementary classes which are pull out programs. Also having a classroom space in which to teach.

12. Teachers are often isolated from each other; professional development opportunities are too few.


14. The first year is too late in school.

15. Aural skills, stability of technique.
16. Growing numbers of involved students; excellent materials and instruments available; technology and other resources available.
17. Lack of support – money. Many administrators do not understand the requirements for a successful program.
18. Having a non-string major teaching strings. (Ex. band or choir director) or having a string major who has had a poor methods class at their college. I have had student teachers who play their instrument well, ex. (a violinist) but are lacking in how to teach cello & bass – or vice versa, a cello/bass player who doesn’t know enough about violin/viola.
19. Instrumentation – many places are short violas, cellos & especially basses.
20. Teachers are not paying attention to basics – posture, position, etc. Too hurried causes complete rehabilitation in middle school.

Where do you feel class string teaching is most effective?

Statement 4: Classes held in PUBLIC SCHOOLS and PRIVATE SCHOOLS
(Not suitable, Less suitable, Suitable, More suitable, Most suitable)

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. Suitable
04. Most suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Suitable
09. Most Suitable
10. Suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Most suitable
15. Suitable
16. Most suitable
17. More suitable
18. Suitable
19. Most suitable
20. Suitable

Statement 5: Classes held in COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (not related to public or private schools)

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. Suitable
Statement 6: Classes held in MUSIC CONSERVATORIES

01. Most suitable
02. More suitable
03. Suitable
04. Most suitable
05. More suitable
06. Suitable
07. Suitable
08. More suitable
09. Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Suitable
13. Suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Suitable
16. Suitable
17. More suitable
18. More suitable
19. Suitable
20. More suitable

Statement 7: Classes held in COMMERCIAL MUSIC HOUSES

01. Less suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Less suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Suitable
08. More suitable
09. Less suitable
10. Suitable
11. More suitable
12. Suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Not suitable
16. Less suitable
17. Less suitable
18. Less suitable
19. Suitable
20. Less suitable

Statement 8: Additional comments or suggestions regarding statements 4-7

01. Despite my answers to 4 & 5, I have witnessed examples of excellent first year teaching in public & private schools and community music schools but observed the most thorough and well-rounded teaching and musical environment in music conservatories and their preparatory/extension divisions hence my choice in #6.
02. The space is not that important anyway. The main issue is the avoidance of distractions.
03. No matter where classes are held, if taught by string specialists with a solid curriculum and knowledge of beginning pedagogy, these will be successful. Commercial music stores in general do not screen their teachers as well for quality.
04. None
05. None
06. None
07. In public, private and community schools, students who may not have had the opportunity to study an instrument are given one. It is in those arenas that we reach the most students, making string playing for everyone, not just for those who can afford it.
08. None
09. None
10. The location is only as suitable as the quality of instruction.
11. None
12. None
13. Where ever the student, parent feel comfortable
14. None
15. Music stores don’t maintain competent stable of teachers.
16. Public schools are usually more open to all socio-economic levels, though other institutions may make this available; public schools tend to emphasize comprehensive musicianship over together institutions.
17. None
18. However, the key to any successful program is the quality of the teacher and the amount of parental support.
19. #5 and #6: Private instruction is well suited to these. #7, of course, depends on many factors. I have not seen evidence that any other institution teaches strings in mixed classes (let alone with success) other than the public schools.
20. None

What age do you feel is ideal for students to begin string-instrument instruction in the classroom setting?

Statement 9: Age 3-5 (Preschool)

01. Most suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Most suitable
04. Less suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Not suitable
07. Not suitable
08. Not suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Less suitable
12. Suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Not suitable
16. Less suitable
17. Less suitable
18. Most suitable
19. Not suitable
20. Not suitable

Statement 10: Age 6-7 (1st-2nd Grade)

01. More suitable
02. More suitable
03. Most suitable
04. Less suitable
05. Suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Less suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Less suitable
12. Suitable
13. Most suitable
14. Suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Less suitable
17. Less suitable
18. Most suitable
19. Not suitable
20. Not suitable

**Statement 11: Age 8-9 (3rd–4th Grade)**

01. Suitable
02. Most suitable
03. More suitable
04. More suitable
05. Most suitable
06. More suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Most suitable
10. Suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Most suitable
15. Suitable
16. Suitable
17. Suitable
18. Most suitable
19. Suitable
20. Most suitable
Statement 12: Age 10-11 (5th-6th Grade)

01. Less suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Suitable
04. Most suitable
05. More suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Suitable
09. Most suitable
10. Most suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Suitable
15. More suitable
16. Most suitable
17. More suitable
18. Less suitable
19. Most suitable
20. Less suitable

Statement 13: Age 12-13 (7th-8th Grade)

01. Less suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Less suitable
12. More suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Most suitable
16. More Suitable
17. Suitable
18. Less suitable
19. More suitable
20. Not suitable
Statement 14: Comments or additional suggestions

01. Both for social development reasons as well as the need for establishing good ear training and gross & fine physical movements and coordination associated with string playing, I feel starting at the pre-school age offers the greatest chance for success and high achievement but I have seen some examples of students who started in middle school who went on to excel in music so, though not preferable, it is certainly not too late an age.

02. The problem is that if too early, the learning curve is so slow and the physical makeup of the student is not developed sufficiently to have control of the instrument. On the other hand if the interest is not sparked fairly early it is hard for the student to find room in their lives to compete with other diversions.

03. Late learners generally learn more quickly but frequently have more position problems. The earlier – the better for ear training and ease in positions.

04. 4th and 5th grade seems to be the best. I have found that too many kids that start earlier are bored by the time they get to 4th, 5th or 6th grade. I think in a school setting it is probably best to start band and strings at the same time. This alleviates a large dropout rate.

05. Suzuki instruction is appropriate for preschool age, but that is generally private instruction with some limited group lessons, and not strictly group instruction.

06. None

07. Very young children would do better in private lessons as opposed to classes. 3rd and 4th grade also gives students an opportunity to play strings before the band instruments. Hopefully this takes away some of the competition of which to join, and allows for a higher retention rate in strings when the students are offered band instruction at a later grade.

08. I believe that 3rd grade is a very suitable age group, though I have seen younger at times.

09. Muscle learning and intellectual perception are optimal in the classroom setting from 9-12 years old.

10. This question does not consider the factor of instructional time. Given the typical school setup, elementary instruction takes place in poor conditions and with inadequate time. Early MS usually includes more instructional time and the students are stronger and have better coordination than the younger ages.

11. None

12. None

13. None

14. None

15. Answers depend on frequency and duration of instruction periods.

16. Beginning at early age may be good for a given child, however a later starting age is better for an overall program in terms of retention efforts.

17. None

18. In response to item 9 – classroom instruction must be supplemented by private lessons. Of course all would benefit from private lessons at any age. Also, parents would need to come to lessons in age 3-5. We have a Montessori School in
Cincinnati where parents come before or after work to attend their child’s private lesson.

19. Despite success of Robert Guaspari & others, very young children thrive better in a traditional one-on-one setting. For developing artistic players this is still the best route (early start, highly qualified teacher).

20. None

What works best: group, individual, or a combination of lesson types?

Statement 15: The string class meets 2-3 times a week, AND each student gets one 15-minute lesson.

01. More suitable
02. Most suitable
03. Most suitable
04. More suitable
05. Most suitable
06. More suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Most suitable
10. More suitable
11. Most suitable
12. More suitable
13. Suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Suitable
16. More suitable
17. Most suitable
18. Most suitable
19. Most suitable
20. Suitable

Statement 16: The string class meets 4-5 times a week, no individual lessons given.

01. Suitable
02. Not suitable
03. Suitable
04. Most suitable
05. More suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Most suitable
08. More suitable
09. More suitable
10. More suitable
11. More suitable
12. More suitable
13. Suitable
14. Less suitable
12. More suitable
13. Suitable
14. More suitable
15. Most suitable
16. More suitable
17. Suitable
18. More suitable
19. More suitable
20. Most suitable

Statement 17: All string students start with individual (private) lessons only

01. Most suitable
02. Suitable
03. More suitable
04. Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Less suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Suitable
13. Suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Suitable
17. More suitable
18. Less suitable
19. More suitable
20. Not suitable

Statement 18: Comments or additional suggestions

01. Because of the unique physical make-up of each student as well as their patterns of learning, I feel one-on-one instruction initially is the most ideal. However, not long after a basic foundation seems to be taking hold I would encourage group instruction. I have witnessed excellent group teaching with older elementary aged children without parents around to insure the success of that instruction but at younger ages it seemed success was very dependent on a team of teachers. That is, the parents learning/working together with their children and the classroom instructor to insure focus and attention that would guarantee solid learning.

02. None
03. Depends on the size of the string class. Ideal is fewer than 10. Individual is preferred over classes larger than 10.
04. Too many times students that only take private lessons get bored and quit. They miss hearing the other instruments of the string family as well as the ensemble experience. I think that being in a group also gives them a set of friends that share common experiences. The best combination would be school lessons and private lessons.
05. It is difficult to answer these questions without knowing the age parameters. Different types of instruction fit different age levels.
06. None
07. A combination is definitely the best! Seeing first year students 4 to 5 times a week, even without individual lessons is still wonderful. Even though private lessons are excellent, most students do not have a private lesson more than once a week. Daily contact with the teacher is optimal.
08. Any individual or private lesson can increase knowledge of the instrument exponentially.
09. None
10. In item 17, how long are the lessons and how often? It’s more a function of contact time than private vs. group if the methodology is sound.
11. None
12. None
13. All of this depends upon the teacher. At the early age the students feel more comfortable with other students because it is a getting adjusted period.
14. None
15. Answer also depends on the socio-demographic and cultural background of kids.
16. This is difficult to rate – depends on many factors including age, teacher quality, size of class, etc. Individual instruction is wonderful, though 15 minutes a week seems almost useless. Individual instruction is prohibitively expensive and probably not economically defensible in a public school setting.
17. None
18. In item 17 – would be great if had group lessons also at least 2x’s a month or better yet – once a week: then this would be Most Suitable of all!
19. Nothing reinforces participation & proper instrumentation like a well-balanced instrumentation group start: however, artistic playing (at a true competitive level) needs one-on-one with a specialist to realize its potential.
20. Students are challenged by the group experience.

CLASS SIZE

What is the ideal size for the beginning string class?
Statement 19: 10-15 students

01. Most suitable
02. Most suitable
03. Most suitable
04. Most suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Most suitable
10. Most suitable
11. Suitable
12. More suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Most suitable
15. Most suitable
16. Suitable
17. Most suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 20: 15-20 students

01. Suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. Most Suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Suitable
09. Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Less suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Not suitable
14. More suitable
15. Suitable
16. More suitable
17. Suitable
18. Suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable
Statement 21: 20-25 students

01. Less suitable
02. Not suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Less suitable
05. Suitable
06. More suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Less suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Not suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Not suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Most suitable
17. Not suitable
18. Less suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 22: 25-30 students

01. Not suitable
02. Not suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Not suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Suitable
07. Less suitable
08. Not suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Not suitable
12. More suitable
13. Not suitable
14. Not suitable
15. Not suitable
16. Suitable
17. Not suitable
18. Not suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable
Statement 23: 30+ students

01. Not suitable
02. Not suitable
03. Not suitable
04. Not suitable
05. Not suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Not suitable
08. Not suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Not suitable
12. Suitable
13. Not suitable
14. Not suitable
15. Not suitable
16. Less suitable
17. Not suitable
18. Not suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 24: Comments or additional suggestions

01. I feel that despite having high numbers to combat attention, a greater disservice is done to the students when numbers go beyond 25. It becomes very difficult to manage all the basics and give enough attention to the individual(s) within the group who may not be catching on to what the majority are. Inevitably, private time has to be set aside for such individuals. At least with smaller size groups at the beginning level it is easier to get and keep the students’ collective attention and still help those with individual needs within the group class setting.
02. None
03. Too many position issues and intonation issues with larger classes. I prefer meeting fewer times with smaller classes so each child gets some individual attention.
04. This depends on how many times a week you get to have class. The more individual attention you can give, the better.
05. The more students there are in the class, the less time is available for tuning and individual attention. If large classes are unavoidable at beginning levels, there should be additional teaching staff available to team teach.
06. Number of students and effectiveness also depends on the age of the students - larger classes of older students may be just as effective as smaller classes of younger students.
07. Smaller groups allow for more individual attention. I have experience with groups over 30 and I find that facilities, time with individual students and classroom management all become problems when there is only one teacher for that number.
08. More than 10 students for a third grade class is too many.
09. None
10. Numbers are inversely proportional to teacher effectiveness even with good group teaching techniques.
11. None
12. None
13. Eight students at the most.
14. None
15. None
16. Optimum size of class depends on facilities, frequency of instruction, and teacher quality. But all things being equal, a group of 20-25 students is efficient, offers a positive group dynamic, but allows for some individualization or small group work.
17. None
18. It may be impractical but the ideal situation would not have more than 10 in a class unless you have an assistant. Such big classes produce so many problems in position, etc., etc.
19. Depends on age & frequency of classes. More frequent meetings make larger class sizes possible. There is no possible correct or preferable answer without consideration of other variables.
20. Ideal size is 4-5 students.

LENGTH OF CLASS TIME

What is the ideal amount of time for the first-year string class?

Statement 25: 30 minutes

01. Suitable
02. Most suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. More suitable
06. Less suitable
07. More suitable
08. Suitable
09. Less suitable
10. More suitable
11. Suitable
12. Suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Suitable
17. Suitable
18. Suitable
19. Suitable
20. More suitable

**Statement 26: 45 minutes**

01. More suitable
02. Suitable
03. More suitable
04. Most suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Most suitable
10. More suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Most suitable
15. Most suitable
16. Most suitable
17. Most suitable
18. Most suitable
19. Most suitable
20. Most suitable

**Statement 27: 60 minutes**

01. Most suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Less suitable
08. Not suitable
09. Suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Suitable
12. More suitable
13. Suitable
Statement 28: Comments or additional suggestions

01. One of the great flaws of our modern society is a lack of ability to pay attention and stay focused and a succumbing to that weakness such that everything is compartmentalized into sound bytes or summed up and often dumbed down to make things easy to digest. But real life is not like that and the riches of music require our best efforts – including the ability to concentrate over longer periods of time so I feel even for pre-schoolers working towards an hour long group class (perhaps with a couple of breaks in between) is not out of the question.

02. The answer to the above question is directly related to the age at which these classes start. It is always a mistake to try to hold the attention of a young student beyond their capabilities.

03. Younger children (preschool) work best in 30 minute or shorter lessons. The older the child, the longer the lesson can be.

04. This also depends on the number of times the classes meet and the age of the student. The younger (grades 1-3) can only concentrate for about 30 minutes.

05. A sixty-minute class length is pretty unrealistic in today’s public schools. It is on the long side for the typical age beginner, but a talented teacher could make it work.

06. Length of time is also a variable with number of class meetings per week. More classes can be successful with less time. Student age and maturity play a role in how long the lesson period can be effective.

07. None

08. 30 minutes for at third grade class is more than enough. Attention span is important.

09. None

10. Physical and mental endurance are big considerations here. More time is not better PER CLASS. Total time is important though.

11. None

12. None

13. My answers are based upon a class of 8 students and I would prefer a class for 1.5 hours.

14. None

15. None

16. Depends on age, but 60 minutes is long – actually I think 50 minutes is perfect.

17. None
18. The length of class depends on the age of the student. 30 minutes for K-2; 45 for others. 60 minutes too long unless grade 7 and up.
19. There is no right answer – frequency of meeting is a variable which cannot be separated from this question; age as well and whether the class is homo or hetero [sic].
20. None

HOMOGENOUS AND/OR HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES

Which is preferable? The separate teaching of like instruments: 1) violin/viola in a class and cello/bass in another class (homogeneous grouping), OR 2) the combining of violin, viola, cello, and bass in one class (heterogeneous grouping)?

Statement 29: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously (a violin/viola class, and a separate cello/bass class.

  01. Not suitable
  02. More suitable
  03. More suitable
  04. Less suitable
  05. More suitable
  06. Most suitable
  07. Most suitable
  08. More suitable
  09. More suitable
  10. Suitable
  11. Most suitable
  12. Most suitable
  13. Suitable
  14. Less suitable
  15. More suitable
  16. More suitable
  17. More suitable
  18. Most suitable
  19. No response
  20. More suitable

Statement 30: First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously, with bass being taught separately from cello.

  01. Most suitable
  02. Suitable
  03. Most suitable
  04. Less suitable
  05. Most suitable
Statement 31: The first-year string class should be grouped heterogeneously (violin, viola, cello, bass together in the same class).

01. Not suitable
02. Suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Suitable
07. Suitable
08. Not suitable
09. Less suitable
10. Suitable
11. Less suitable
12. Suitable
13. Not suitable
14. Suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Most suitable
17. Suitable
18. Less suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable
Statement 32: First-year string classes should be grouped heterogeneously with violin, viola, and cello, only, in the class. Bass should be taught separately (and perhaps at a later age).

01. Not suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Most suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Less suitable
12. Less suitable
13. Suitable
14. Most suitable
15. Suitable
16. Less suitable
17. Suitable
18. Not suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 33: The first-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously for the first 2–4 months and then subsequently it should be grouped heterogeneously for each class meeting.

01. Less suitable
02. Suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Not suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Suitable
09. More suitable
10. Suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. More suitable
15. Most suitable
16. Suitable
17. Suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. Less suitable

**Statement 34:** The first-year string class should meet 1-3 times homogeneously and 1 time heterogeneously (for an ensemble experience) in the same week.

01. Less suitable
02. More suitable
03. More suitable
04. Suitable
05. Most suitable
06. More suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Suitable
09. Most suitable
10. More suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Suitable
15. Less suitable
16. Suitable
17. More suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. No response

**Statement 35: Additional comments or suggestions.**

01. Each string instrument offers the unique challenges so I feel separation is best at first. An ensemble experience can still be had by doing separate violin, or viola, or cello or double bass duos/trios/quartets in each homogeneous class. Get the foundation solid, bring the kids together when there is at least a minimum workable skill level.

02. I do not like to have to choose in any of these categories since I think all approaches can work, but the specific needs of each instrument can be very diluted in heterogeneous settings, though the trade off in ensemble experience has its merits.

03. Heterogeneous grouping early on gives students the idea of an ensemble experience. Positions must be set first!

04. I like the heterogeneous without the bass the best. 2-3 classes does not really get the position set and my kids don’t start reading the notes until they get to the Jingle Bells page of Essential Elements.
There is no reason bass can’t be offered to beginners, unless because of age, they are too small to handle even the smallest bass size available.

Number 34 is the ideal situation. Separation of upper and lower strings has proven successful for me.

Assuming appropriate techniques and knowledge of the instructor, heterogeneous is not a compromise and can be a strong motivator for students. The problem is, many teachers do not know HOW to handle mixed instrument teaching.

I’ve become a believer in heterogeneous instruction – the teacher must be trained how to do it right!

I always have taught bass with everyone else & it works fine for 4th grades. There are small basses available for any size child or you can even put bass strings on a full size cello & tune as a bass. Homogeneous ideal but very difficult to carry out unless you would have team teaching (1 teacher do upper; 1 teacher do lower). Reason – scheduling problems. In our school each classroom had music all at the same time. Some went to band with a teacher. Some went to strings with a teacher. There is only 1 teacher for each choice. We could not have homogeneous unless there would be two teachers. The only way a homogeneous setting would work is if children were pulled out of the academic setting & schools are moving away from pull out programs. (Unless, of course, you had team teaching which would be too expensive for most schools – why pay for 2 teachers when one could do the job? – administrators not OK with this.)

(Cannot choose specific answers) – it all depends… Depends: is this a situated class or a pullout – how often do they receive instruction? How old are the students? Younger students will do better in a like-instrument setting; upper elementary/MS will do well in either. How deep is the staff? How often do classes meet? Is a grade given or is the class a pullout? These questions can’t be answered unless combined with more variables.
METHODS AND/OR METHOD BOOKS

Is it necessary for the teacher to have his/her very own method? What is best for the ideal first-year string class: one’s own method which is more or less reflected in a particular method book; one’s own method in which a variety of method books are used; or, lacking one’s own method, adoption of a method which appears to be successful, at least commercially?

Statement 36: Use one commercial method book series, only, in the first-year string classroom.

01. Suitable
02. Most suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Suitable
10. More suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Less suitable
16. More suitable
17. Suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. Less suitable

Statement 37: Do not use any commercial method book in the first-year string classroom: use teacher-prepared/collected material, only.

01. Suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Most suitable
04. Less suitable
05. More suitable
06. Not suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Suitable  
12. Not suitable  
13. Suitable  
14. Suitable  
15. More suitable  
16. Less suitable  
17. Less suitable  
18. Not suitable  
19. No response  
20. Most suitable

**Statement 38: Use a combination of method books in the first-year string classroom.**

01. Most suitable  
02. Suitable  
03. More suitable  
04. Most suitable  
05. More suitable  
06. Suitable  
07. Most suitable  
08. Less suitable  
09. Most suitable  
10. Less suitable  
11. More suitable  
12. Not suitable  
13. More suitable  
14. More suitable  
15. Not suitable  
16. Most suitable  
17. Most suitable  
18. Less suitable  
19. No response  
20. Less suitable

**Statement 39: Additional comments or suggestions.**

01. There are many wonderful ideas not found in published books as well as useful books so why not take advantage of everything that can potentially work. No need to limit instruction at any level, not just first year, to a set method book.  
02. Good materials are good materials wherever they come from but there is a convenience to having everything in one place, especially for young students, and there is also a benefit to having one approach to avoid any apparent conflict of method.  
03. Teacher prepared materials must follow a scope and sequence to be as successful as commercial method.
05. Just to be practical, asking children or young people to be responsible for bringing one method book or one notebook made by the teacher is the most desirable. Asking kids to remember a variety of books is a lot to ask!
06. The amount of extra material provided is directly related to the frequency of classes and the amount of time allotted. Supplemental resources are valuable if time permits.
07. I think any of the above will work well depending on the teacher using them. In the case of younger, more inexperienced teachers, adopting a method book series that has proven successful may be what they need to do until they have collected more materials and have had more experience designing quality materials.
08. I like to stick with one book and series for consistency.
09. Teacher/prepared material varies greatly in quality, so it is hard to evaluate this.
10. It’s not about the book but it can save time and give students a concrete series of progress.
11. None
12. None
13. BOOKS ARE GOOD TO ENCOURAGE READING BUT MANY OF THE FIRST YEAR THINGS CAN BE TAUGHT WITHOUT A BOOK.
14. None
15. None
16. Any teacher worth their salt will have their own good ideas to employ in the first year. But the current commercial books, with all their additional resources are excellent – given the typical heterogeneous public school situation.
17. None
18. I only use one method book, but use supplemental material in performance pieces. Essential Elements for Strings with the CD – the best book! And String Along by Stoutamire & Henderson has great 1st year pieces in it (e.g. “Soul Strings” and “Shortnin’ Bread.” Essential Elements also has good program pieces to be purchased in coordination of technical lessons being taught at 1st year level in the method book.
19. None of this matters – it all comes down to individual teachers. These are meaningless questions. This all depends on the strengths of the particular teacher (and preference, too).

20. Method books should not be used in the 1st year. Students need to work on posture and intonation.

PERFORMANCES

How many performances should occur in the ideal first-year string class? At what point should the first performance occur? What should the first public performance consist of in terms of content?
Statement 40: There should be not public performances for the first-year string class.

01. Not suitable
02. Not suitable
03. Less suitable
04. Not suitable
05. Less suitable
06. Not suitable
07. Not suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Not suitable
11. Not suitable
12. Not suitable
13. Not suitable
14. Not suitable
15. Not suitable
16. Not suitable
17. Less suitable
18. Not suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 41: There should be one public performance for the first-year string class.

01. Suitable
02. Less suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. More suitable
06. Less suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Not suitable
10. Less suitable
11. Suitable
12. Not suitable
13. Less suitable
14. Less suitable
15. Suitable
16. Most suitable
17. More suitable
18. Less suitable
19. No response
20. Not suitable

Statement 42: There should be two or more performances for the first-year string class.

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. More suitable
04. Suitable
05. Most suitable
06. Most suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Most suitable
10. Suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Suitable
15. More suitable
16. Most suitable
17. Not suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. Most suitable

Statement 43: The first public performance should occur within the first 3-5 months of the beginning of instruction.

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. More suitable
04. Suitable
05. Most suitable
06. More suitable
07. Less suitable
08. Less suitable
09. Most suitable
10. More suitable
11. Most suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. Suitable
15. Most suitable
16. Most suitable  
17. Not suitable  
18. Most suitable  
19. No response  
20. More suitable

**Statement 44:** The first public performance should occur after 6-9 months of instruction.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 01 | Most suitable |
| 02 | Suitable |
| 03 | Suitable |
| 04 | More suitable |
| 05 | More suitable |
| 06 | Less suitable |
| 07 | Most suitable |
| 08 | Most suitable |
| 09 | Less suitable |
| 10 | Less suitable |
| 11 | Less suitable |
| 12 | Not suitable |
| 13 | Less suitable |
| 14 | Less suitable |
| 15 | Less suitable |
| 16 | Less suitable |
| 17 | Suitable |
| 18 | Less suitable |
| 19 | No response |
| 20 | Most suitable |

**Statement 45:** The first public performance of a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, and beautiful tone on open strings.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 01 | Suitable |
| 02 | Less suitable |
| 03 | Most suitable |
| 04 | More suitable |
| 05 | Most suitable |
| 06 | Less suitable |
| 07 | Suitable |
| 08 | Most suitable |
| 09 | Most suitable |
| 10 | Suitable |
| 11 | Most suitable |
Statement 46: The first public performance of a beginning string class should consist of simple tunes.

01. Most suitable
02. Suitable
03. Suitable
04. More suitable
05. Most suitable
06. More suitable
07. Most suitable
08. Most suitable
09. Most suitable
10. Less suitable
11. More suitable
12. Most suitable
13. Suitable
14. More suitable
15. More suitable
16. Most suitable
17. More suitable
18. Most suitable
19. No response
20. Most suitable

Statement 47: Comments and additional suggestions.

01. My answers are based on the anticipation that after 3-5 months of instruction students should be able to show good posture, instrument position, bow hold, etc., and that after 6-9 months very simple tunes should be possible. The motivation of the students must be kept in mind – it would be hard for parents and students alike to tell that very much had been achieved if, after nine months, the students could only hold the instrument and bow correctly and make sounds on open strings. It should be possible to achieve more than that in the first year, hence my expectation that simple tunes should be possible after 6-9 months of instruction.
02. Having a forum to demonstrate their skills is very important for young people, but I think it should at least wait until there is some actual musical end product, rather than just a demonstration of holding the instrument.
03. Performing for others as soon as correct posture and good tone can be demonstrated. Provides confidence and a sense of accomplishment that will encourage further progress.
04. There are many factors that can play into this question. I have one big concluding concert at the end with mini-concerts within the school. It would be best if I did an “informance” concert in January but I haven’t made time to do that. The kids are motivated to perform.
05. It is very helpful and motivating to give performances in the first year. However, they are most effective when given as demonstrations of the process and goals of teaching or a sharing of what is learned. It is not desirable to spend all of instruction time on performance music. The first year should be mostly about setting up good habits.
06. Concerts should include both concepts in #45 and #46.
07. Having at least one performance in the first year is a good experience for the students. They deserve to show the public what they have learned, it is good to spotlight any string program, and performances are often motivating factors for students.
08. Conflicts between what parents and administrators want can deflect from what should be done at a public performance.
09. Both #45 and #46 if possible
10. I would vote for a combination of 45 & 46. The earlier the performance the better in terms of student motivation and support for the program.
11. From my experience teaching I was more successful when I gave a demonstration/concert in Jan. or Feb. with the beginners. Each child had to have a parent sit with them and the parents had to try some of the techniques. It helps increase parent support, awareness and appreciation for the discipline involved to learn to play a string instrument.
12. None
13. PERFORMANCES KEEP THE PARENT INTERESTED AND THAT KEEPS THE STUDENT INTERESTED.
14. None
15. None
16. A combination of 45 and 46 is best.
17. None
18. Combine #46 and #47. The beginning strings should play for the younger students (for recruitment). 4th graders should play for K-3 every year!
19. #40-42: Who can answer this? #43-46: Any of these are Most Suitable, depending on what the other variables are. All depends on how frequently students meet, at what level (age), etc.
20. None
Question 48: Should first-year string students be required to have 1-2 years of general music that includes the teaching of aural skills, rhythm, and note reading preparation before learning to play a string instrument? If so, who should instigate a concerted effort to lobby for creating strong general music classes in all schools? Or, should this preparation be the responsibility of the teacher of first-year string players?

01. Yes, they should and parents and the music faculty at the school should lobby for it – these foundational skills are ESSENTIAL and make the learning of an instrument so much easier – at least not everything will seem new the first time a student tries to draw an even tone at an even speed with the bow. He or she will at least have some sense of rhythm and pitch established.

02. No – do not overload. Once the joy of playing is established then the other aspects should/must be introduced.

03. First year string players can be successfully taught without any previous experience if the string teacher includes it as the student is ready. Older students (3-6 grade) should be exposed to general music concepts to help accelerate the progress of learning an instrument.

04. I have taught for 28 years now in an excellent school system. I have worked with many exemplary general music teachers. Yet, somehow when these kids get to note-reading they really can only read if they have had piano lessons. I’ll ask what a quarter note is and they can’t tell me. I find I end up basically teaching all these skills again.

05. Yes, that would be most helpful! Even where general music instruction is available, string teachers need to be prepared to reinforce the concepts throughout the early years. Writing general music into state requirements through legislatures is probably the most effective way to get some sort of program mandate into the schools.

06. Take the students from what background they have and move them forward; no two classes or two years are ever the same.

07. Yes. Lobbying for strong general music classes should be undertaken by state arts coordinators, caring educators, and community supporters of the arts. These people should make it known to education policy makers that general music needs to be offered to all students and taught by a music specialist, particularly at the elementary school level.

08. It should be a concerted effort from the school system, not just an individual.

09. Yes. It should be a part of the general curriculum of the school and taught by the teacher responsible for that program. Sometimes this is the string teacher.

10. A good general music foundation is important for any healthy music program. If one had to choose, go with general music! If general music is adequate, string instruction can take place concurrently.

11. All elementary schools should have a general music program which starts in Kindergarten.
12. The ideal situation for elementary students would be to have regular music classes taught by a music specialist. Unfortunately this is not always possible. So string teachers must begin where the students are and go from there.
13. IF WE ARE TALKING 5 YEAR OLDS THEY HAVE HAD PRE-SCHOOL WHICH INCLUDES SOME MUSIC AND MOVEMENT BUT LITTLE ELSE AND THAT MEANS MUCH IS WITH THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER.
15. All students should have a strong general music experience taught by a classroom music specialist. The classroom music program should connect elegantly to the first-year string class.
16. Yes – the state should mandate strong general music classes. In its absence, the string teacher must be responsible for this instruction.
17. General music is important for all students but should not be a requirement.
18. The entire music staff & the community should support strong general music.
19. Build on general music skills. District supervisor of music should ensure this groundwork is in place – this is an administrative responsibility.
20. My experience has always been with students having a solid general music background. However, I don’t believe it is necessary to the 1st year string student.

Question 49: Should improvisation be an integral part of the first-year string class?

01. No. I don’t have a problem with including it but not as an integral part. Get the foundations of ear training, good posture, good bow hold and straight bows, a good sense of rhythm, etc. going well first.
02. Yes. Simple improvisation is a good route to self-expression.
03. Yes. Improvisation (and composition) are both important parts of playing any instrument and give the student ownership and a dimension of importance when playing their own work.
04. Yes. I start each class with a call and answer session from day 2. It never ceases to amaze me how reluctant the kids are to come up with their own original answers – even if the notes to be used are spelled out. The 4th graders have a hard time. 6th grade beginners seem less inhibited.
05. Yes. Simple improvisation should be an outgrowth of rote teaching and learning.
06. Yes. Improvisation skills – answer games – should be a part of the 1st year class – integral is a strong word. Many 1st year techniques are establishing the building blocks for what might be termed real improvisation that will occur later.
07. No
08. Yes. Improvisation is always good. However, in this case, only if the student initiates. Don’t try to push.
09. Yes
11. Yes
12. No. I realize that this is not a politically correct answer!
13. No. THEY ALREADY HAVE PLENTY OF THAT
14. No
15. Yes
16. Yes. It’s irresponsible not to include improvisation from the beginning!
17. Yes. Yes! Student can take something like Hot Cross Buns and play around with the 1st three notes.
18. Yes
20. No. 1st year should solely be dedicated to basic posture and ear training.

**Question 50:** What technical issues, such as 1) use of 4th finger, 2) number/which strings should be introduced the first year, 3) introduction of positions AND/OR position changes for violin and viola, and 4) introduction of cello extensions, should merit further discussion and consideration?

01. Use of fourth finger and playing on all 4 strings should happen in the first year. If not position changes, at least the fundamentals of shifting or the freedom to shift and vibrate, for example, should be set.
02. The fourth finger definitely should be used to avoid the need for reshaping the left hand position at a later date. Positions should be introduced once a first position is securely established. This will vary with the student.
03. All merit further discussion. I use 4th finger right away, all strings right away, position changes in second year, cello extensions (and bass block position) right away.
04. I don’t really understand what the question is here. These all depend on how many times you see the kids and what the class size is. 4th finger and use of at least 3 strings should be taught in the first year. I think I would only begin shifting if I were teaching 6th graders and seeing them at least 3 times a week.
05. It is desirable to introduce the use of fourth finger the first year to begin to strengthen that finger. Two strings is very reasonable to expect – the D scale and D major is workable, but kids should be introduced to the other strings. It is easy to do rote work which will make shifting easier when it is time to use it (other than the bass students, who should be shifting the first year to reach C# and D on the G strings. I would personally not introduce cell extensions – I would rather get the basic first position finger placement established.
06. This question is too complex to answer in a few sentences and warrants an extended discourse which time does not permit now!
07. Use of 4th finger and use of slurs.
08. Depends on the progress of individual and group of students.
09. 1) 4th finger should be introduced for hand shaping. 2) All strings should be introduced. Contrary to what many teachers think, this is easy for the students. 3) No positions for violin/viola (in school classes). 4) Cello extensions, 2nd position and bass positions (essential).
10. All of the above. The sooner these skills are introduced the better.
11. Shifting and the introduction of vibrato in the first year, merit further discussions.
12. 1, 3, and 4. I don’t know that there would be much discussion about which strings to introduce the 1st year. Most of us go with the method books, and they are consistent about presenting all 4 strings, I think.
13. 1) NO. 2) ALL STRINGS. 3) NO. 4) ONLY AS NEEDED.
14. Tonality, fingerboard knowledge.
15. What is meant by further discussion and consideration? By whom? In general, I’d say more discussion about 4th finger and shifting motions is needed.
16. Huh? Bad question!
17. 1st year – Twinkle var; reading notes & simple rhythms, slurs, 4th finger, F and C naturals.
18. Just follow Bk.1 of “Essential Elements for Strings” in sequence & you will be handling all technical issues needed to be learned in the first year.
19. All of these – they are all variables which will be imparted by age, class size, class frequency, etc.
20. Which strings should merit further discussion – violinists should not be in the key of D (E & A strings) for some time.

**Question 51: What should be the overall focus in the first-year string classroom?**

01. Some initial ear training/rhythm skills prior to playing on the instrument, correct posture, bow hold/bow stroke, left hand position, playing notes in tune and with a stable rhythm. Playing ensemble pieces in an orchestral setting should not be attempted until these things have been achieved.
02. Sound – pitch – rhythm.
03. Good listening skills, good position, good tone. Knowing how a good tone is produced. Being able to adjust out of tune notes by listening. Recognizing the elements of good position.
04. Getting positions set, getting a good basic tone and note reading/playing simple melodies on at least the A and D strings. The position, bow hold and a good tone are musts!
05. Proper beginning set-up, posture, hand positions, an awareness of intonation, beginning tone production (pizz and arco), simple note and rhythm reading.
06. Correct position, good tone quality, correct rhythms.
07. Correct instrument posture, bow hold, high quality tone production and intonation, and the ability to read simple notation from the staff.
08. Good tonation, balance and blend, posture, holding of instrument and bow, basic musical skills such as note reading.
09. Position, beautiful tone, simple melodies using all strings, basic music reading and improvisation.
10. Posture, Position, Tone, and Intonation along with a variety of basic skills and tunes.
11. Correct posture, proper bow hold, produce a good tone, play with good intonation and rhythm.
12. High standards for all skills!
13. POSTURE, RIGHT AND LEFT HAND POSITION, SIMPLE TUNES AND SCALES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE AND MAINTAIN INTEREST.
15. Intonation and characteristic sound.
16. Position, aural development, ear-to-hand skills.
17. Solid fundamentals – posture, hand position, bow, string crossings, pitch, reading.
18. Proper position, tone production, intonation, straight bows. FUN with high quality teaching!!
19. Creating a focused sound, playing in tune, reading at technical level (playing in good rhythm, including at sight) and responding to a conductor (teacher).
20. Correct posture, bow hold, intonation training, correct technique for each of the four instruments.

**Question 52: What do you feel are the most important components for success in the first-year string class?**

01. Persistence – dogged persistence and determination and the belief in students firmly enough to expect them to “get it” and not take the easy way out and lower expectations for the sake of giving them the “candy” of playing tunes when the teacher knows that the basics are not there. Be persistent and consistent in one’s standards. It’s the foundation that will result most likely in getting the students’ respect and cooperation. Also the component of the teacher talking with parents or guardians of potential string class enrollees and telling them what will be expected of their child as well as of them. Without solid support from the home front, the first-year string class will be much harder to work with.

02. Care and attention.

03. Positive modeling by the teacher, constant reinforcement of good technique and monitoring and adjusting of problem areas. Lots of listening and echoing for good ear training.

04. Good modeling by the teacher, a good pace in the class (but not so quick that problems are not addressed and fixed), some type of motivational program, parent positive attention, and good group support. I have seen way too many teachers not even pick up an instrument to model and the kids have to see this or they get bad habits right from the start. The teacher has to be nurturing.

05. Enthusiastic, well-trained teachers, quality instruments, adequate class time, supportive parents.

06. Stressing the basics – making good music – having fun.

07. As much contact with the students as possible, definitely not only once a week. A good method book from which to work and a teacher with clear goals in mind.

08. All of the above – consistent success from lesson to lesson.

09. Position, tone, good intonation, simple melodies.


11. A room to teach, a good schedule, consistent lesson attendance and sequenced instruction, instruments in good working order.
12. Excellent teaching; support and interest from parents; student practice.
13. A GOOD TEACHER THAT IS MUSICAL, KNOWLEGABLE AND CAN PLAY THE INSTRUMENT.
15. Singing, rote instruction, playing by ear, stabilize technical motion.
16. Superb teacher modeling, pacing, purposeful sequential instruction, ear development, strong teacher-student interaction, engaging teacher personality.
17. Making the students feel successful in performing each new technique. Make the techniques accessible and flow to make music.
18. Good teaching will produce good playing. Success makes a child want to continue. Getting parental support is the key element to success, too. Don’t forget the importance of dealing effectively with teachers and administration also. They need to sound good and be proud of what they have achieved. 1st year students can sound good with proper teaching! AND hard work.
19. A qualified/effective teacher and enough time to teach; everything else is detail – success comes in a variety of ways.
20. A string teacher who is extremely knowledgeable on all instruments. A person who has tremendous energy and strong convictions about string playing in general.

**Question 53:** What should determine the pace of a first-year string class? What minimum technical and musical skills should most of the students have mastered by the end of the first year?

01. Ability to hold the instrument and bow properly – draw a clear sound with a straight bow, and play fingers 2, 3 & 3 (for violin & viola) in tune with a steady tempo for a basic one octave scale. This is the minimum.
02. The students.
03. Pace is determined by the progress of the students. Minimum skills should include proper positions, good tone on all four strings, ability to use all four fingers, ability to listen to each other and play as a group, ability to recognize good position and tone quality in themselves and others.
04. Each class seems to be different and I find I have to pace depending on the level of kids. If I end up with a lot of LD kids in a class, or kids that don’t practice – it slows everything down. See #51 for what they should have mastered.
05. Good beginning hand positions, good beginning tone, note reading in the key of D major, rhythms involving quarter, half, and eighth note patterns.
06. This question also warrants extended discussion. Pace varies from school to school, class to class, and year to year. In general, students should have mastered a specific number of finger patterns, rhythms, and bowing styles and understand basic music notation.
07. Work backwards and decide what is essential for them to know and be able to do at the end of that first year. Design lessons with those end goals in mind. Students at the end of the first year of study should have correct instrument posture, correct bow holds, an ability to produce a good tone on the instrument, perform the D and G Major scales and simple melodies in those keys. Students should also be able to
read melodies in the keys of D and G, read and perform quarter, eighth, half and whole notes and rests.

08. Depends on the progress of each class – some can play many notes correctly, utilizing note values, etc. Others still need to be in proper playing position.

09. Number of meeting times per week, length of class, size of class. By the end of the first year they should be able to hold the instrument correctly and play a few simple melodies.

10. Instructional time and practice opportunities. Mastery of none, but exposure to three bow strokes, three finger/tonal patterns, and three rhythmic concepts (duple and triple subdivisions, etc.).

11. The schedule (how many times a week the classes meet and for how long), the level of the students, 4th graders will move slower than 6th graders, ex. See above question 52 for skills mastered.

12. The teacher should determine the pace. The primary goal should be to play with excellent intonation and tone quality, with good position. Secondary goals would be to finish a book one and to enjoy playing.

13. THE TEACHER AND THEIR GOALS, WHICH SHOULD INCLUDE A REASONABLE BOW HOLD, POSTURE, LEFT HAND, A FEW SCALES AND SOME FAMILIAR TUNES.


15. The slower the better.

16. Time allowed on task, number of weekly student/teacher contacts. Skill list is too detailed a question for this survey! I take my kids at least through Unit 9 or 10 of “String Explorer.”

17. Age and maturity of the student. Basic level 1 material.

18. The goal should be to finish “Essential Elements” Bk 1.

19. Playing with accurate intonation & rhythm; if this it not happening, nothing else matters.

20. Whether homogeneous or heterogeneous should determine the pace. Should have correct bow hold direction and left hand set-up in place (no problems).

**Question 54: Indicate the most important attributes of the ideal teacher of first-year strings.**

01. The ability to communicate with passion and love the joy of learning to teach and play a stringed instrument and music in general and the energy to do so. The ability to use language clearly and without malice, but still honestly, to help correct mistakes and encourage improvement, and the obvious, the ability to play the instrument well enough to do what one is expecting one’s first year students to do, and hopefully a good deal better than that. Sadly, I have witnessed far too often this last attribute completely missing – a most intolerable and unacceptable situation.

02. Patience and enthusiasm as well as a solid personal understanding of the mechanics of playing the instrument.
03. Patience, organization, ability to continually monitor and adjust progress in a positive way, good modeling skills, ability to think on her feet and adjust her teaching as necessary to fit the curriculum in place to the class.

04. Good musician, likes kids, can demonstrate on all instruments, can get points across and knows how to teach the same concept in many disguised ways, patient, not critical, gives feedback that is specific (VERY IMPORTANT and one I rarely see as a mentor teacher), enthusiastic, can maintain discipline, good communication skills, knows how to pick appropriate music for programs, can pace the lesson, knows how to write a lesson plan.

05. A love of young people and music, good training in string playing and teaching skills, an enthusiasm and patience for the challenges of beginners.

07. Love of students and music.

08. Patient, inspiring and caring. They should definitely have a working knowledge of the age level with which they are working and an ability to speak to and work with them at their level. Putting music and instrumental instruction into terms the child can understand and relate to is extremely important.

09. Patience, able to listen and assess students’ abilities appropriately.

10. Love of music and children. Knowledge of effective methods for teaching, ability to play one instrument well (even if it is not a string).


12. Enthusiastic/Organized/Knowledge – able to demonstrate and tune and make minor instrument repairs.

13. Well trained during undergraduate program. A hunger to keep learning, attend conventions, read journals, etc. Love for string playing and for teaching. Understanding of how to work with people effectively.

14. PATIENCE, PERServerANCE, KNOWLEDGE OF THE INSTRUMENT, LOVE OF MUSIC AND TEACHING.

15. Persistence and high standards.

16. Understanding of sequential pedagogy and the learning process of diverse students, including the development of aural skills and the recognition of what musical skills the kids already bring to the string classroom.

17. Competent player and musician, awareness of child development, awareness of appropriate sequencing of instruction, engaging and pleasant personality, detail-oriented, high standards.


19. Having a personality that turns on the students & gets along with others. Having a passion of the subject area. Going that extra step – e.g. calling parents & encouraging private lessons. Extra help sessions before and after school.

20. Knows what he/she wants and how to get the results.
Question 55: Should there be minimum standards/requirements established at the university level for future teachers of beginning string classes?

01. Yes. Much needs to be done to improve the actual playing skills of future string teachers. Minimum requirements are a step in the right direction and this can only be achieved if the future string teacher is given enough time to master certain skills.
02. Yes
03. Yes. Importance of this cannot be stressed enough. Too many teachers are not adequately prepared to teach beginners.
04. Yes. Make sure universities use the standards that came out of the OSU Symposium a few years back. Get the college kids teaching experience like the Consortium schools have.
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes
08. Yes. Prospective teachers should be able to demonstrate a minimum proficiency required to teach beginning string players.
09. Yes
10. Yes. But include non-string as well as string players. The latter are very important parts of the puzzle due to the shortage of string player teachers.
11. Yes. A recital on each of the string instruments should be required. A study of the literature and method books.
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. No
16. Yes. Standards must be tied to time allotted to course.
17. Yes
18. Yes
19. No response.
20. Yes. We have many, many mediocre string programs in this country, much of which is due to inadequate university training programs.

Question 56: Even with a shortage of string teachers in the U.S., should teachers whose primary instrument is not a string instrument be hired to teach first-year string players?

01. No. NO!!! It is a disservice to string teachers all over as well as students to have someone who has no idea of how to play a string instrument teach it. Yes in dire circumstances, a musician on another instrument is better than no teacher at all for that person can still teach the hearing of pitches and rhythms and dynamics, etc. but given the choice of faulty instruction (however benignly intended) that would take years to undo and simply waiting for a strings teacher to become available before starting a string program I’d rather wait for the right person to come along.
By analogy, would one have the orthopedist treat lung cancer? Yes any doctor will know certain things about medicine but obviously one needs the right person for the job – string teaching in that sense is no different than the medical profession.

02. No. Playing a string instrument entails such a subtle use of the body that one who does not actually experience it would find it extremely hard if not impossible to convey the necessary kind of bodily feedback to a student.

03. Yes. But only with training from a string specialist in the important areas of position and tone quality. They should be able to model these!

04. Yes. IF, they have a GOOD class in pedagogy. For example, Bob Culver at U of Michigan has great success with these kids. The teacher also needs to agree to take private violin lessons and should be assigned a mentor.

05. Yes. In some cases, it is unavoidable, but teachers in that situation should be required to receive additional training. It is vital that beginners be given a solid foundation.

06. Yes. Background on strings is important but not the only factor.

07. Yes. Yes, but ONLY if those teachers are motivated to learn the instruments themselves, seek additional support for the class by bringing in a string specialist sometimes and the program is at risk of being cut for lack of a teacher whose primary instrument is a string instrument.

08. Yes. Although a string professional is the best solution, teachers who are certified in the areas of instrumental music are more than capable of meeting the needs of the school system, parents and students.

09. Yes. With proper training in materials and methods.

10. Yes. Yes, but only with good pedagogical training.

11. Yes. If they have taken lessons or are able to demonstrate in an interview a level of competence on each instrument.

12. Yes

13. No. NOR SHOULD A QUALIFIED STRING TEACHER TRY TO TEACH A TRUMPET STUDENT HOW TO PRODUCE A SOUND OR DEVELOP AN EMBOUCHURE.

14. No

15. Yes

16. Yes. Certainly, if they know what they’re doing – which shouldn’t be a problem if #55 is in place, at least on the university level.

17. No response

18. Yes. A non-string major should be required to have 1 year course – no less!

19. Yes. Wind/brass/percussion majors are doing a stunning job in places like California; without theses colleagues teaching & beginning strings, we will never reach as many students as we should.

20. No. Unless there is a strong mentoring program by a string specialist, tone production is very difficult for a non-string player to achieve from students.
Question 57: What do you feel are the most important steps that should be taken to improve first-year string classes?

01. The most important steps are for school systems (most likely, music supervisors in consultation with music faculty) to establish standards that set a goal so there is something to be motivated by to work towards, to hire people who can play what they are going to teach, to have teachers communicate to both students and parents what their standards are, requirements for homework/practice etc., and to require listening of music so that, just as with immersing oneself in a language, it gets to be a basic and familiar part of the students’ lives, and to have many approaches/ways of explaining things to reach the students and not fall back on what is convenient or easy or familiar – too many teachers are uninspiring and appear to be going through the motions showing little enthusiasm. One must always be interested – with that one quality, every aspect of teaching first year string class can be improved. Finally, music supervisors need to communicate with newly hired teachers what is expected of them and to set them up with a network of experienced teachers (including private studio instructors) or at least paired with a veteran teacher who can show them and to set them up with a network of experienced teachers (including private studio instructors) or at least paired with a veteran teacher who can show then the ropes and help them avoid common mistakes in the first year of classroom instruction.

02. Hire only the best teachers, those who embrace my answer to number 54.

03. Established curricula by the teachers – no matter what they use – needs to be organized, sequential and consistent with further instruction.

04. In addition to upper string, lower string classes, teach a string ped class where the students play the secondary instrument, learn things like how teach note reading and rhythmic skills (another thing not often taught well), learn about appropriate literature, get some teaching experience before student teaching and be sure that only outstanding teachers get student teachers. That does not happen where I work.

05. Be sure that those teaching beginners are well trained, work on support from administrators with adequate teaching time and facilities, improve the quality of instruments available to beginners.

06. Refine how to successfully teach the basics.

07. Give teachers more time with the students and adequate facilities. Many string teachers I know see first year classes only once a week.

08. Creating environments suitable to teach the instruments, including time, location, etc.

09. Better prepared teachers.

10. Teaching methodology and scheduling.

11. Knowledge of materials/Proper sequencing/Help with schedules.

12. This question is too broad for me to answer.

13. A QUALIFIED TEACHER AND A EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS TEACHERS TO TEACH A FIRST YEAR CLASS AND NOT HAVE IT MIXED WITH 2ND OR 3RD YEAR STUDENTS.
15. Class size and the skills to teach kids in groups rather than multiple, simultaneous private lessons.
16. Demand adequate and consistent time within the school day for scheduling of classes, on a par with academic classes.
17. Schools must make strings a priority. Band and choir are not enough. Money!
18. Better teaching by a qualified string specialist. There needs to be better string method classes at some universities. Just because a person plays well on their instrument does not mean they can teach well.
19. Prepare teacher – what other roles could any of us play?
20. Better training at the college level; more experienced teachers with good programs in contact with the college students; more of a “reality” check with life outside the college walls.

Question 58: Changes over time: who should be responsible for change, if necessary, in the teaching of first-year strings? The university level? ASTA? The teachers in the schools? All of the above?

01. All of the above should be involved in the process. The more feedback the institution that is graduating future string teachers has, the better they can serve their musical community. For example, if University X were to get feedback from School A that School A was repeatedly having trouble with University X’s graduates in the area of conducting a string ensemble compared with University Y’s graduates then University X would be able to put a plan into place to improve/rectify that weakness in their program. The university and its teachers need to be in contact with the teachers in the schools and the music supervisor of the school system their graduates may end up serving.
02. Change will always come through the research of teachers, and through experience in the field, [don’t let] gimmicks rule the field.
03. All of the above – it needs to be a cooperative dialog to be effective. Model teachers need to work with universities and with new teachers to initiate change.
04. ASTA should take the lead here and work with university (like they did with the String Project) and the teachers in the schools.
05. All of the above should share in the responsibility.
06. Teachers need to have a desire to improve their teaching and seek out opportunity to improve their teaching skills by attending workshops, clinics, conventions. The expertise is available if a teacher wants to find it.
07. The teachers in the schools will have the most impact on what is done in the first year string class. They will need the support of professional development from ASTA with NSOA and need to work closely with universities, especially in the area of string teacher education.
08. It should be a collaborative effort, but also professional development and workshops to help string teachers.
09. The university. Administrative support bring help to the teachers.
10. All
11. All of the above.
12. All
13. ALL OF THE ABOVE. CERTAINLY NOT ANY ONE OF THE ABOVE BY THEMSELVES.
14. University programs and mentoring programs in public schools.
15. ASTA with NSOA.
16. All of the above – otherwise it’s whistling in the wind
17. All the above.
18. All of the above!
19. All of the above, of course. The nation will never be able to embrace just one approach (certain age, certain type of class, etc.). What will be most useful is to cultivate a “best practice” using a variety of strategies so that success can be realized within a variety of constraints. The Northeast will not be instituting whole classes of beginners – we won’t change this but we can help them do their work at a higher level.
20. All of the above working together.

**Question 59: And finally, please identify other areas of concern/questions that you feel should be included in this survey.**

01. The process of future string teachers doing “field work” to get a first hand taste of what it will be like to teach in the classroom before they graduate – what should be involved as part of that experience, and how frequent and how long a period of time, who should be involved in setting up such experiences, whether teachers not as familiar with certain string instruments should be required to take private lessons as part of that experience before they go out to student teach. In general, the building up of a structure to help the school music teacher feel supported and to bring the various strands of the music teaching profession together to help each other help our students – the process by which this can become a community effort and not feel like it is a lonely battle of one teacher up against the educational and political bureaucracy. I realize these issues apply not just to first year string teaching and may go beyond the scope of the survey but I thought they should be noted.
02. I personally really hate this kind of questioning. It so often avoids any of the more subtle answers that many of these issues should address. In my own case it is also a questionnaire that explores an area of teaching that I have not personally experienced.
03. Curriculum development – how to develop. Too many teachers teach without one and don’t know where to start.
05. How can administrative support help us improve programs?
06. No response.
07. Scheduling of classes in the public schools, class length, ideal number of students in a first-year class for optimal teaching and performance results.
08. Nothing at this time.
09. More questions about teaching music reading.
10. How teachers become certified to teach strings! State boards of education should be examining more closely the training/qualifications of people allowed to reach string in the schools. And states must require continuing training in teachers’ chosen specialty.
11. How many cities/counties have a coordinator to schedule and monitor teachers? Are cities/counties working from a curriculum or teaching with no set curriculum or goals?
12. These are excellent and thought-provoking questions. I have enjoyed thinking about them! For this survey, I think they are certainly adequate.
13. THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS REGARDING BEGINNING STRING CLASSES AND I AM NOT SURE THEY CAN BE GROUPED TO PROVIDE OVERALL ANSWERS TO FIRSTYEAR STRING CLASSES BECAUSE WE ARE ALL REQUIRED TO GET THE JOB DONE WITH WHAT WE HAVE TO WORK WITH AND WHAT WE HAVE IN THE PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES WE ARE IN AND EVEN AS WE TRY TO CHANGE THEM WE HAVE TO STRT WITH WHT WE HAVE.
15. Diversity of school settings for string programs, especially urban and rural programs.
16. No response.
17. Funding for strings in our school systems.
18. How do we get more interest in classical music? There is an erosion of arts & culture in our society.
19. No response.
20. A great concern of mine is the “teaching personality of a strong teacher”. They all need an acting course! Competition is tough these days – we have to be stronger in every way.
Section I: GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRING PLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY

Statement 1: There are many dedicated, excellent teachers in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-08. Yes
09. No. There aren’t enough and I haven’t seen all that many I would consider to be excellent. The younger ones do not seem to have the dedication of the older ones.
10. Yes
11. Yes. But how do we define “many.”
12-20. Yes

Statement 2: There is more and higher quality material, including real teaching pieces (rather than transcriptions), in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-14. Yes
15. No response. Very confusing question. This is unclear. Do you mean solos? Study material? Orchestra pieces? Why isn’t a good transcription (of a solo, etude or orchestra work) not “real” or of “high quality”?
16-20. Yes

Statement 3: There are excellent first-year string method books available in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-10. Yes
11. Yes. But, again – what is excellent?
12-15. Yes
16. Yes. Also, some very fine teacher produced materials.
17-20. Yes
Statement 4: There are a growing number of string students (growing interest in string instruments) in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-02. Yes
03. Yes. There is a growing number in our area of the country. I can’t speak for everywhere.
04-15. Yes
16. Yes. In many instances due to the dedication and perseverance of string teachers in the U.S.
17-20. Yes

Statement 5: There is more opportunity, in general, for taking first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-05. Yes
20. No. I thought 25% of our school systems had string programs, but recently learned that this percentage is lower…20%. Actual statistics are needed for a proper response to this answer.
07-08. Yes
09. No. I don’t think research would prove this true.
10-14. Yes
15. No response. As opposed to when? Based on what statistics?
16-20. Yes

Statement 6: There is more rote teaching (ear training) than before in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01. No. Before what? Or when?
02-10. Yes
11. Yes. Suzuki.
12-14. Yes
15. No response. As opposed to when? Based on what statistics?
16. Yes
17. No response. Rote teaching and ear training are not the same. Also, I don’t have any way of knowing if there is more or not.
18. Yes. Due the Suzuki movement.
19-20. Yes

Statement 7: There are better recruiting efforts being made for first-year string players in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-04. Yes
05. No. I don’t know if this is true – past recruiting was quite effective.
06-07. Yes
08. No. Recruiting is only possible if the schools have resources for a string program. Recruiting efforts, for the most part, are done in the more affluent schools.
09. No. I have seen some but not many!
10-11. Yes.
12. No. I would like to know of some those recruiting efforts.
13. Yes
14. Yes. Do you mean efforts to recruit first-year string players?
15. Yes. Probably.
16-20. Yes

Statement 8: Research into the psychology of teaching has greatly improved the overall level of teaching in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. No. Although the psychology of teaching is a required course to receive a teaching credential it is difficult to say that it has improved the level of teaching. Good teachers have been in the classroom for years.
08. Yes
09. No. The research is not disseminated widely enough or in simple layman’s terms.
10. Yes
11. Yes. Developmental psych is fundamental to teaching strings – Suzuki is based on this.
12-13. Yes
14. No
15. Don’t know.
16. Yes
17. No. I think that better materials and better in-service training have done more than actual research.
18-20. Yes

Section II: GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRING PLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY.

Statement 9: There are too many first-year string students who are NOT taught by string specialist OR who are taught by a weak, rather than strong, non-string player in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-02. Yes
03. No. We need to do a better job of recruiting and retaining excellent string specialists.
04-05. Yes
06. This is not the case in my district. Without actual numbers I am not qualified to answer this question.
07. No. The quality of teaching is based on understanding of the instrument,
correct posture and tone production. A string major has an advantage in understanding these concepts but faces the same teaching and motivational challenges as a non-string major teaching strings.

08. Yes
09. No.
10. Yes
11. Yes. There are too many. I think that will always be the case.
12-14. Yes
15. No. Poor question design – there are 2 questions here. This is IMPOSSIBLE to answer in such a narrow frame – some of the finest programs are in the hands of non-string players.
16. Yes
17. No. I don’t really know these facts – would be interested to learn from others about this.
18-20. Yes

Statement 10: There are too many teachers who are lacking a methodology (ergo, not all basics are being taught) in their teaching of first-year string players in the U.S. today.

01. Yes. Wherever the instruction is essentially by rote, the students learning in a school situation, only, suffer.
02-05. Yes
06. No. In my school district we have agreed on several method books. Again I cannot speak for all school districts.
07. Yes. Too many teachers “wing” it. They do not follow a systematic introduction of skills, an organized curriculum.
08-10. Yes
11. No. I am a little confused by the yes or no option. However I think most teachers know/are OK with methods.
12. No. I believe that some of the basics are there, just not specific techniques and methods for helping to play the instrument more easily.
13-20. Yes

Statement 11: There is too much stress on WHAT to play, rather than HOW to play an instrument, in too many first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-05. Yes
06. No. I feel most 1st year teachers are addressing the basic technique. ??? I hope so.
07. Yes. Too much emphasis has been placed on performance rather than taking the time to master basic skills.
08-10. Yes
11. No. I don’t know any – OK with methods
12. No. I think that many teachers would not accept the “get by” mentality when it comes to playing any instrument, not just strings.
13-14. Yes
15. ? Have no idea what this means.
16. Yes. Position and tone control must be established right from the start.
17-20. Yes

Statement 12: Teaching is often hurried because too often there is not enough time allotted to a first-year string class in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-10. Yes
11. Yes. This is always a major problem.
12-14. Yes
15. It depends WHERE – There seems to be plenty of time when classes are scheduled every day and never enough time when students are pulled out once a week.
16. Yes
17. No. Middle school students participate in regularly scheduled longer classes. I think these are the majority (but I could be wrong about this fact.)
18. Yes. Also, the instructor feels too much pressure to perform in a few months.
19-20. Yes

Statement 13: Students are often started too late (age) in first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01. No. Any time from 4th through 6th grade is ideal.
02-03. Yes
03. No. I feel that there is a considerable age range suitable to begin playing a stringed instrument.
04. No. I believe most students are started in or about 5th grade, which I have come to believe is a good age for string study – assuming music instruction is provided in some form before this age.
05. No
06. No. We have not defined what is late. There are many successful string programs that start students in the 6th and 7th grade. It is not the grade level alone at the time of beginning which dictates success.
07. Yes
08. No. Not in my experience.
09. No. Personal experience leads me to believe that many states do begin string classes in 4th grade, which is not too late age-wise.
10. Yes. Generally, but this is a relative thing.
11. No. I think most string classes begin by the 3rd grade.
12. Yes.
13. No. String class lessons for kids younger than 10/11 aren’t as efficient as private lessons for younger children.
14. Too late for what? To become Joshua Bell, probably. To play well in orchestra, probably not.
15. No. Although the younger, the better, it is never too late to start. I have had much success with students who have started as late as eighth and ninth grade.
16. No. What is “too late”?
18-19. Yes
20. No. It is never too late.

**Statement 14: There is a lack of standardization (age, class size, heterogeneous/homogeneous grouping, number of classes/week, length of class.)**

Yes, No

01. Yes. These differences may be a good thing. Teachers’ effectiveness varies.
02-03. Yes
04. No. Standardization is not a value marker
05-06. Yes
07. Yes. But, does there need to be? Recommended numbers for ideal but these need to be adapted to meet local circumstances.
08-10. Yes
11. No. I have never had a problem with this.
12-13. Yes
13. Yes. Thankfully, now only if each teacher had the authority to fashion the situation in the ways they felt would best serve their students.
15. Yes
16. No. I am not sure it needs to be standardized. Teachers must adapt to the situation at hand. That is where teacher preparation, enthusiasm, and a good methodology for beginning classes come into play.
17-20. Yes

**Statement 15: There are often scheduling problems for first-year string classes in the U.S. today.** Yes, No

01-03. Yes
04. No. It’s possible but I really do not know.
05-06. Yes
07. Yes. One of the major problems. Administration support solves the scheduling problems. “Lip” service support places the program in bathrooms, hallways, etc., to survive.
08-10. Yes
11. Yes. This really depends on the school administration.
12-13. Yes
14. No. Not sure it is “often.”
15. Depends on where.
16-20. Yes

**Statement 16:** Classes of first-year string players are often too large in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-03. Yes
04. Yes. From my perspective, more than one student at a time is too many so it’s an unpopular viewpoint.
05. Yes
06. No. This has not been my experience in my district.
07. No. Need statistical evidence to back up this statement. Far too many are too small from lack of good recruiting.
08-09. Yes
10. No. I cannot speak for the entire U.S., however, many programs I know of are still trying to grow, recruit more students and expand.
12. Yes. Mine are. However, this is due to lack of teachers, money, and support.
12. No. Depends on scheduling. None that I know.
13. Yes
14. No. Not sure it’s “often.”
15. Depends on who is teaching.
16. Yes
17. No. If anything, many classes are too small to produce a beautiful resonant string orchestra sound.
18-19. Yes
20. No. With the correct methodology, larger classes can produce good results.

**Statement 17:** Teaching facilities and location of classes are often inadequate for first-year string classes in the U.S. today. Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Definitely!
08-10. Yes
11. Yes. I often go from classroom to classroom.
12-13. Yes
14. No. If there’s enough support to have a program, facilities tend to follow pretty well.
15. Depends.
16. Yes
17. Don’t know about this.
18-20. Yes
Section III: TEACHING LOCATION; where do you feel first-year class string teaching can be most effective? More Suitable, Less Suitable

Statement 18: Classes held in PUBLIC SCHOOLS and PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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Statement 19: Classes held in COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (not related to public or private schools, usually run by parents and/or private teachers)

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Statement 20: Please explain why you chose either statement 18 or 19 as second choice.

01. Less uniformity in instruction.
02. No response
03. There are usually more resources available in public and private schools to hire string specialists and adequately fund a program.
04. I do not have an opinion
05. Attendance in Community schools often depends on financial ability.
06. No response
07. Private schools as a general rule focus and support the arts more thus providing space and time in the curriculum for them.
08. No response
09. Community schools are often expensive and many people can’t afford them.
10. Community schools often do not have a standards-based adopted curriculum to guide them. Public and private schools often do.
11. Public and private schools offer programming with greater resources in almost everyway: money, teachers, facilities, and networks. They also are more likely to have some means for being evaluated and accredited.
12. Any time students can learn in a private setting or one on one would be conducive to an appropriate environment. That includes learning from a string specialist.
14. With the question, effectiveness is not the issue for me. The issue is awareness of possibility of taking lessons and access to those lessons…the greatest optimal access is provided by schools…all kids go there and hear about the possibility and for those who sign up, they are physically there for lessons.
15. Community school teachers are often not certified or trained in music education – most have not had training in teaching strings in classes.
16. All children need to be exposed to the opportunity to play a string instrument – not just those who can afford private instruction.
17. An “official” school environment provides a structure of permanence and importance. When students attend regular classes and receive grades, they perceive the program as more valuable. Organized schools have better financial resources, opportunities for performance, etc.
18. Unsure of question.
19. Community schools don’t have standards.
20. Greater access to instruction in public schools. This is a very awkward question. Why not pair community and public schools?
Section IV: VARIABLES

Ideal Student Age  Less Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 21: Age 8-9 (3rd-4th Grade)

01. More Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. Less Suitable
06. More Suitable
07. Less Suitable
08. More Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. More Suitable
11. No response
12. More Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. Less Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. More Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. More Suitable
20. Less Suitable

Statement 22: Age 10-11 (5th-6th Grade)

01. Less Suitable
02. Less Suitable
03. Less Suitable
04. Less Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. Less Suitable
07. More Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. More Suitable
10. Less Suitable
11. More Suitable
12. Less Suitable
13. Less Suitable
14. Less Suitable
15. More Suitable
16. Less Suitable
Statement 23: Please explain why you chose either statement 21 or 22 as second best

01. I think that 4th and 5th grades are the most suitable.
02. Ear training and physical exposure to and development of coordination and fine motor skills should begin earlier rather than later. Exceptional talent notwithstanding, children are learning language and learning to walk at a very early age. The language of music and the movements it requires playing on a string instrument likewise benefit from earlier rather than later exposure. To quote one famous music educator, “Do you delay it because it is difficult or is it difficult because you delay it.”
03. At age 8-9, students have the capability to understand music reading, but they are young enough to have a number of years to develop their basic skills before there are expectations of high levels of performance.
04. I think that a range dependent on the maturity of the student is more important than chronological age –attention span –etc.
05. Physical and mental development at age 10-11 is more suitable.
06. Older students if they are in a middle school setting, may have to make choices for elective classes. In elementary I feel all have an opportunity to get started on an instrument.
07. The maturity of the student allows them to progress faster and to deal with the discipline required. A side benefit is that more students can start on a full-size instrument.
08. I would prefer that students start at age 5 and 6.
09. Fifth graders are more coordinated (or so it seems) and seem to be able to learn at a higher level, quicker.
10. Students at the 5th and 6th grade level are in middle school. Some middle schools give students a limited number of electives, thus making the students choose between band, chorus, and other electives. If one “hooks” the student when they are younger, middle school programs grow and thrive.
11. No response.
12. The younger the students begin playing an instrument the more possible success they will have. Musical intelligence can be increased by the age of nine, after that it is mostly based on attitude and effort.
13. The younger the better. Age 10-11 not as good as age 8-9.
14. Lower hormone levels.
15. Older students are able to progress faster in group settings than younger ones (which do better one-on-one). Older students are more focused & can manage their own practice.
16. Students are mature enough to develop listening skills as young as ages 8 and 9. The sooner they begin, the easier it is to train and refine their listening.
17. Younger children are more focused. More years between beginning and being an adolescent are ideal.
18. No response
19. Students need time to gain ability before social pressures of middle school.
20. 10-11 are physically more mature, yet still developing musical aptitude.

**Class Size** Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable

**Statement 24: 5-10 students**

01. More Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. Less Suitable
06. More Suitable
07. Less Suitable
08. More Suitable
09. Suitable
10. More Suitable
11. More Suitable
12. Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. No response
16. More Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. Suitable
20. More Suitable

**Statement 25: 10-15 students**

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Suitable
07. Suitable
08. Suitable
09. More Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Suitable
12. Less Suitable
13. Suitable
14. Suitable
15. No response
16. Less Suitable
17. Suitable
18. Suitable
19. More Suitable
20. Suitable

Statement 26: 15-20 students

01. Less Suitable
02. Less Suitable
03. Less Suitable
04. Less Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. Less Suitable
07. More Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. Less Suitable
11. Less Suitable
12. Less Suitable
13. Less Suitable
14. Less Suitable
15. No response
16. Less Suitable
17. More Suitable
18. Less Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. Less Suitable

Statement 27: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. The smaller the class size the more individual the attention. When dealing with such basics as setting up, posture, and stance, bow hold, etc. a large class size will make it much more difficult to get such fundamentals solidly grounded because of the greater diversity of physical body sizes and shapes, aptitudes for particular ways of learning (verbal, kinetic, visual, etc.). The larger the class size, the longer it will take to tune instruments and the greater likelihood of discipline problems. Just as with our democracy, the greater the numbers, the greater the diversity, the harder and longer it takes to reach a consensus.
03. 5-10 students gives the opportunity for individual attention, but still allows for ensemble playing.
04. In line with my preference for one-on-one whenever possible as an ideal, in a class situation, therefore, the smaller the better.
05. 15-20 provides a critical mass of sound, less than 10 students is economically inefficient for public schools.
06. No comment
07. Group dynamics work best for heterogeneous classes. Some teachers prefer small classes, but success can be achieved with a few more students.
08. Eight is a good size to start [with] and usually end with about 5 or maybe 6 students.
09. No comment
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. In any class setting, for teacher and student, less is sometimes better, especially for beginners.
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. Answer depends on how old the students are and how frequently they meet. For pull-out/infrequent classes, small is better. For young students – small is better. For older students meeting more frequently, larger classes have advantages.
16. Ideally – five or fewer so that the teacher has a chance to work on positions with each child and to allow each child to demonstrate what they are learning at each lesson. A smaller class size fewer times a week is preferable to a larger class size more times a week.
17. No comment
18. Ideal size is 4-5 students.
19. Logistics decide class size.
20. 5-10 affords more individualized instruction but still motivates through group dynamics.

**Frequency of Class Meetings** Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable, Most Suitable

**Statement 28: Class meets 1-2 times per week**

01. Suitable
02. Less Suitable
03. Less Suitable
04. Less Suitable
05. Less Suitable
06. Less Suitable
07. Less Suitable
08. Most Suitable
09. Suitable
10. Less Suitable
11. Less Suitable
12. Suitable
13. Less Suitable
14. Suitable
15. Less Suitable
16. Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. Most Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. Less Suitable

Statement 29: Class meets 2-3 times per week

01. Most Suitable
02. Suitable
03. Most suitable
04. Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. Most Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. Suitable
20. Suitable

Statement 30: Class meets 3-4 times per week

01. Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. More Suitable
07. Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. Suitable
10. More Suitable
11. More Suitable
12. Most Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. More Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. More Suitable
18. Suitable
19. More Suitable
20. More Suitable

**Statement 31: Class meets 4-5 times per week**

01. Less Suitable
02. Most Suitable
03. Suitable
04. Most Suitable
05. Most Suitable
06. Most Suitable
07. Most Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. Most Suitable
11. Most Suitable
12. Most Suitable
13. Most Suitable
14. Most Suitable
15. Most Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. Less Suitable
19. Most Suitable
20. Most Suitable

**Statement 32: Additional comments**

01. Students need time in between lessons to assimilate the material.
02. With fewer people per class, more classes may need to be scheduled. Given the length of the school day, shorter, more frequent meetings for young students allows for greater retention of material than longer less frequently scheduled classes.
03. 2-3 class sessions is ideal for children in 3rd and 4th grade. It gives time for reinforcement of skills and time to practice in between.
04. Ideally in the first stages of learning a student should be supervised more than urged to practice alone. This way bad habits should never start to develop.
05. Duh! The more class meetings the better!

219
06. No comment
07. All teachers would like to have the students every day but this is not practical with a pull-out program and I assume that is what we are talking about here.
08. Considering the age, twice a week would be about right.
09. No comment
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. The more lessons a student has, the more he/she will become acquainted with the instrument and retain what is taught from lesson to lesson. Once a week with younger children could result in their forgetting important information.
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. No comment
16. Again, I opt for smaller classes fewer times a week rather than larger classes more times a week.
17. No comment
18. Depends on class size. 4-5 students 1-2 times a week is acceptable.
19. Physical training needs guidance.
20. More time is better. How could there be any question about THAT?

**Combination of Group and Individual Lessons:** what works best – group or a combination of group and individual lessons?

**Statement 33:** The string class meets 2-3 times per week, AND each student gets one 20-minute individual lesson per week. Less Suitable, More Suitable

01. More Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. Less Suitable
06. More Suitable
07. More Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. More Suitable
10. Less Suitable
11. More Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. Less Suitable
15. Less Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. Less Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. Less Suitable

Statement 34: The string class meets 4-5 times a week, NO individual lessons given

01. Less Suitable
02. Less Suitable
03. Less Suitable
04. Less Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. Less Suitable
07. Less Suitable
08. More Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. More Suitable
11. Less Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. Less Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. More Suitable
16. No response
17. More Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. More Suitable
20. More Suitable

Statement 35: Additional comments

01. Few schools offer the option of the private lesson time.
02. String playing is just too prone to human idiosyncrasies, especially physical ones, that group teaching alone, even frequent, can cover all the bases. Adjustments with shoulder rests, chin rests, short arms, long arms, double jointed fingers and a whole array of other physical distinctions amongst the members of a string class all but cries out for individual attention. As far as I am concerned this is a no-brainer. You’ve got to have some private instruction going on for string classes, hence also the need for people who play string instruments to be the ones teaching string classes.
03. No comment
04. Same as above (#32). Actually the combination of individual as well as class instruction could be an ideal mixture though I would like even more individual instruction than presented here.
05. Individual lessons are a terrific idea, but economically inefficient and a scheduling nightmare in the public schools.
06. No comment
07. Some time devoted to the individual student is always the best.
08. Individual lessons later after they have decided to stay in the class.
09. With the individual lesson, you can fix problems where in-group instruction you
can’t do it as well.
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. More lessons per week with no individual attention can be good, as well less
meetings per week and with a 20-minute session is also acceptable.
13. No comment
14. The additional up to 2 lessons per week is more effective than a 20-minute private
lesson. 20 minutes is too short.
15. Beginners move faster in a class. Individual lessons will be more productive later.
16. The teacher needs time to work with each child’s unique abilities and needs.
17. No comment
18. Individual lessons are not necessary if students are in contact with the teacher 4-5
times a week.
19. Scheduling private lessons is too hard and not the responsibility of public school.
20. With good methodology, 4-5 times is much more efficient use of contact time.

**Length of Class Time: what is the ideal amount of time for the first-year string
class?** Less Suitable, More Suitable

**Statement 36: 30 minutes**

01. Less Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. Less Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. Less Suitable
06. Less Suitable
07. Less Suitable
08. Less Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. Less Suitable
11. Less Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. Less Suitable
14. Less Suitable
15. Less Suitable
16. More Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. Less Suitable
Statement 37: 45 minutes

01. More Suitable
02. Less Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. Less Suitable
05. More Suitable
06. More Suitable
07. More Suitable
08. More Suitable
09. More Suitable
10. More Suitable
11. More Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. More Suitable
15. More Suitable
16. Less Suitable
17. More Suitable
18. Less Suitable
19. More Suitable
20. More Suitable

Statement 38: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. Given the grade/age level, fewer number of students per class and the frequency of classes I selected, I feel the shorter time would be better at 1st grade.
03. 45 minutes allows for tuning time and gives the instructor lots of time to reinforce hand position and bow skills while also working on music and advancing technical knowledge.
04. Concentration level versus the other aspects of the age group and the mixture of class versus individual time.
05. 45 minutes allows for latecomers and tuning, etc.
06. No comment
07. No comment
08. I would prefer a class of 8 students for 1.5 hours for communication and learning the instrument.
09. If you have large classes and do not have the prep time to tune the instruments, you lose a lot of time tuning – especially when the weather changes and the pegs slip!
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. More time a teacher has with the student, the better. No more than 45 minutes because their attention span will not last as well as their ability to hold the
instrument for a long period of time. Age and frequency of each meeting is also a determining factor.
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. How old are they?
16. 30 minutes for a group of 5 or fewer. 45 minutes for a larger group.
17. No comment
18. 30 minutes is enough with 4-5 students.
19. No comment
20. Obvious, don’t you think?

**Homogeneous or Heterogeneous Classes: which is preferable?** Less Suitable, Suitable, More Suitable

**Statement 39:** First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously (a violin/viola class, and a separate cello/bass class)

01. Suitable
02. Suitable
03. More Suitable
04. More Suitable
05. Suitable
06. Suitable
07. More Suitable
08. Suitable
09. Less Suitable
10. Suitable
11. Suitable
12. More Suitable
13. More Suitable
14. Suitable
15. Suitable
16. Suitable
17. More Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. Suitable

**Statement 40:** First-year string classes should be grouped homogeneously, with bass being taught separately from cello.

01. More Suitable
02. More Suitable
03. Suitable
04. Suitable
Statement 41: First-year string classes should be grouped heterogeneously (violin, viola, cello, and bass taught together in the same class)
Statement 42: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. Each instrument has its unique set of fundamental physical challenges. This is best handled in a homogeneous setting.
03. Any of these combinations will work if the teacher is skilled and there is enough time to address the differences between instruments.
04. This, too, would be strongly affected by the other variables. The experience of playing the wide pitch range is positive, but the inevitable lack of individual attention grows ever larger.
05. Basses need the sound of celli to ascertain pitch. The success of heterogeneous or homogeneous grouping depends on the training of the teacher as much as anything.
06. No comment
07. There is some merit to teaching two groups – high and low strings. This is due to efficiency of instruction. Focusing on one set of problems is always easier to deal with – it makes good sense.
08. I would have each instrument in a separate class: violin, viola, cello, bass.
09. The kids can hear all the instruments and get the idea of a full sound from the start. Also, in reality, with the heavy emphasis on NCLB it is almost impossible to ask a classroom teacher to split their class up like that. (No Child Left Behind)
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. Homogeneous classes are better for beginning students to learn; however, students should be grouped in heterogeneous lessons from time to time in order to hear the different parts once they have a handle of the instrument in homogeneous classes first.
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. An important point – is the stress on STRINGS or is it ORCHESTRA? The answer will be different. The above answers are based on [my] assumption that this is ORCHESTRA-DRIVEN curriculum, not a string-driven one.
16. Most suitable would be to separate the violins and violas, also.
17. No comment
18. The technical problems of each instrument are too difficult to teach in a heterogeneous class.
19. No comment
20. All can be effective if the teacher has it together.
**Heterogeneous/Homogeneous Combinations:** notwithstanding how you responded above, please rate statements 43-44. Less Suitable, More Suitable

Statement 43: The first-year string class should be grouped homogeneously for the first 2-4 months and then subsequently it should be grouped heterogeneously for each class meeting.

01. Less Suitable  
02. More Suitable  
03. Less Suitable  
04. Less Suitable  
05. Less Suitable  
06. Less Suitable  
07. Less Suitable  
08. More Suitable  
09. Less Suitable  
10. Less Suitable  
11. More Suitable  
12. More Suitable  
13. More Suitable  
14. Less Suitable  
15. No response  
16. Less Suitable  
17. More Suitable  
18. Less Suitable  
19. More Suitable  
20. More Suitable

Statement 44: The first-year string class should meet 1-3 times homogeneously and 1 time heterogeneously (for an ensemble experience) in the same week.

01. More Suitable  
02. Less Suitable  
03. More Suitable  
04. More Suitable  
05. More Suitable  
06. More Suitable  
07. Less Suitable  
08. Less Suitable  
09. Less Suitable  
10. More Suitable  
11. Less Suitable  
12. Less Suitable  
13. Less Suitable  
14. More Suitable
15. No response
16. More Suitable
17. Less Suitable
18. More Suitable
19. Less Suitable
20. More Suitable

Statement 45: Additional comments or suggestions

01. No comment
02. With good, careful, and attentive teaching, certain fundamentals should be in place well enough after 4 months to allow for the homogeneous string classes to be converted to heterogeneous classes.
03. No comment
04. No comment
05. Given these choices, my answer applies. I really don’t think it matters, provided the teacher is properly trained.
06. No comment
07. No comment
08. They should not be grouped together until they have enough common musical knowledge and instrument skills.
09. No comment
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. I would like to have them meet together after a few months.
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. Neither.
16. No comment
17. No comment
18. The ensemble experience should not be considered for several months after starting the beginning class.
19. No comment
20. Both are workable.

METHOD BOOKS: do the current commercial method books represent what teachers need and want for the ideal first-year string class?

Statement 46: Do you feel that current commercial method books offer, for the most part, enough variety and completeness of content to teachers and students of first-year string classes? Yes, No

01. Yes
02. Yes
03. Yes
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes. But there is no ideal method book to match all teaching styles. Method books are guides to assist the teacher. Teachers generally match their teaching style to the style of the method book.
08. No. Only by using a combination of books and written materials can you get “completeness.”
09. Yes
10. Yes
11. Yes. Some are better than others – none of the books I have seen are without compromise.
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. No. Students need rote songs they can play right away without the added burden of reading notes.
17. Yes
18. No
20. Yes

**Statement 47:** Do you feel that teachers of first-year string students, IN GENERAL, have enough knowledge of different methodologies to know how to adequately choose an appropriate method book for their classes? Yes, No

01. No. Many are unwilling to look at new methods or try new ways of teaching.
02. Yes. But, a sizeable minority does not; especially those string teachers for whom a stringed instrument is a secondary one.
03. Yes
04. Yes. Depends so much on their college training.
05. No. String teachers become stuck on one method much more than band teachers – there is a propensity to teach the same way out of the same book because the teacher perceives “it works.”
06. Not qualified to respond
07. Yes. But, they need to be aware of new approaches. No teacher should use one method book for his or her entire teaching career. There is good in all method books, some seem easier to teach from than others. Some challenge the teacher and student. Teachers need to be inspired to challenge students and not take the easy way.
08. No. I really don’t know. The materials are certainly available but how much in depth study of the materials by teachers is the question. Many teachers who find something that is comfortable for them are reluctant to change.
09. No. Too many undergraduate classes still do not study the various methods – or even have college kids evaluate them.
10. Yes
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. Yes
18. No
19. No. College music courses don’t cover material enough.
20. Yes

PERFORMANCES: how often and with what content should first-year string classes perform?

Statement 48: The first public performance by a beginning string class should consist of a demonstration of good posture, correct instrument position, correct bow hold and bowing motion, beautiful tone on open strings, and a few simple tunes. Yes, No

01-06. Yes
08. Yes. But, so should all performances. Too many performances focus on the simple tunes and not on what students are doing to play the tunes – this is true at any grade level.
09-20. Yes

Statement 49: The first-year string class should give 2 or more public performances during the year. Yes, No

01. Yes
02. Yes
03. Yes. Two is plenty!
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes
08. Yes
09. Yes
10. Yes
11. No. No more than 1 or 2.
12. No. It depends on the talent of the group. Teachers need to use their own judgment in this area. Will the students be successful in an early concert?
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. No. It depends on the progress of the class. Teachers need to focus on process, not 
on product, especially with the beginning student.

17. Yes
18. Yes
19. Yes
20. Yes. As long as the fundamentals are not sacrificed.

Statement 50: The first concert should occur when the teacher deems the class is 
ready, EVEN IF THIS IS AFTER the traditional/usual first concert in December. 
Yes, No

01. No. Parents need to be “in on” the students beginning efforts within the first few 
months of lessons.
02. Yes. DEFINITELY!!!
03. Yes
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes. Absolutely!
08. Yes
09. Yes
10. Yes
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. No. Really, everything depends on how often the class meets.
16. Yes. Again – process not product!
17. Yes
18. Yes
19. No. The class needs to be ready.
20. No

MISCELLANEOUS SKILLS

Statement 51: Do you agree that the 4th finger should be introduced to violins and 
violas in the first-year string class? Yes, No

01-03. Yes
04. Yes. This is an absolute! Much damage can be done that is very difficult 
to correct when the use of the fourth finger is delayed.
05-06. Yes
07. Yes. What about requirements for the low strings?
08-14. Yes
15. Yes. This is a no-brainer!!!
16-20. Yes

Statement 52: Should all four strings be introduced in the ideal first-year string class? Yes, No

01. Yes. What is learned on one string can easily be duplicated on the other three strings.
02. Yes
03. Yes. All four strings should be introduced, but the bulk of music reading and our expectations for competent playing should be two strings if the students are under 10.
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes. Some experience on all four strings is good but correct position, intonation, and tone are more important than covering all the strings. Perhaps the question should be re-phrased? Introduced to finger patterns and continual playing on all four strings.
08. Yes
09. No. Not the E or C strings. There is enough to cover with the other 3 strings. (Though they should utilize the open string.)
10. Yes
11. Yes. The key word is “introduced.”
12. No. Not necessarily. Some students may go ahead and learn them, but overall, keep it simple and get a good sound on the d and a strings.
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes. Ditto!
16. Yes
17. Yes
18. Yes. Depends also on the age of the students.
19. Yes
20. Yes

Statement 53: Should improvisation be part of the ideal first-year string class experience? Yes, No

01. Yes
02. Yes
03. Yes
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes
07. Yes. But, can be handled in answer game format. Very basic and confined to 1 or 2 measure rhythms or simple note responses.

08. No. You will hear enough improvising without encouraging it at this time. More skills should be acquired and more musical knowledge learned before approaching improvising.

09. Yes

10. Yes

11. Yes

12. No. Good sound, posture, playing in a group and intonation should be more important.

13. Yes

14. Yes

15. Time permitting.

16. Yes

17. No. Not necessary I first year, and many other skills [are] more important.

18. Yes. To a very limited degree.

19. Yes

20. Yes

GENERAL MUSIC AS A FOUNDATION FOR FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSES

Statement 54: Do you agree that, regarding students having general music classes before they begin to learn to play a string instrument, the following statement represents your view to a high degree? IDEALLY ALL YOUNG CHILDREN, KINDERGARTEN-5TH GRADE, WILL BE PROVIDED A GENERAL MUSIC CLASS TAUGHT BY A GOOD MUSIC SPECIALIST WHO EXPOSES AND TRAINS STUDENTS IN AURAL, RHYTHMIC/MOVEMENT, AND SINGING SKILLS. Yes, No

01-06. Yes

07. Yes. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if that were the case?

08-20. Yes

Statement 55: Do you agree that IF A GOOD GENERAL MUSIC FOUNDATION HAS NOT BEEN PROVIDED FOR THE FIRST-YEAR STRING STUDENT, THE TEACHER OF A FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASS MUST BE QUALIFIED AND INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH THE STUDENTS TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN THESE SKILLS? Yes, No

01. Yes

02. Yes

03. Yes. Students often come to us with different backgrounds, and we have to be prepared to fill in any gaps in their musical education to that point.

04-14. Yes
15. This is too loaded to answer – how much time is there? Are we talking about basics for playing, beyond that?
16-20. Yes

Statement 56: Do you agree that, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO MANDATE THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE EXCELLENT GENERAL MUSIC CLASSES AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL? Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. The music education profession has been trying to get this accomplished since its inception. Let’s keep trying.
08-14. Yes
15. Yes. No-brainer.
16-20. Yes

OVERALL FOCUS IN THE FIRST-YEAR STRING INSTRUMENT CLASSROOM Yes, No

Statement 57: Ear training

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Can’t live without it.
08. No. Taught, no. Create an awareness of, yes. Then see who picks it up with no problem and then who will need more attention.
09-20. Yes

Statement 58: Development of rhythmic skills Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Fundamental
08-20. Yes

Statement 59: Posture and instrument hold/position Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Basic.
08-20. Yes

Statement 60: Bow hold and bow stroke Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Basic.
08-20. Yes
Statement 61: Left-hand shape and position Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Basic.
08-11. Yes
12. No. Not at a young age. Students have a hard time grasping and holding on to the instrument and at the same time concentrating on other important factors. Try to get them to shape as much as possible and show them the correct way, but do not make it a major issue.
13-20. Yes

Statement 62: Tone production and beautiful tone Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. Basic and needs continual attention.
08-20. Yes

Statement 63: Intonation Yes, No

01-13. Yes
14. Yes. Not sure how this is separate from all that precedes it.
15-20. Yes

Statement 64: Ability to play simple tunes Yes, No

01-06. Yes
07. Yes. How else to apply the above concepts.
08-20. Yes

Statement 65: Note reading PREPARATION Yes, No

01. Yes. The best preparation is to give them a book.
02-06. Yes
07. Yes. But, no standard system has yet been devised which is as effective as the real thing – at some point students need to learn to read real music. There is no other way. Sometimes we make things harder by trying to simplify.
08-20. Yes

Statement 66: Note reading Yes, No

01. Yes. Children learn easily if they both read and write the music they are playing. To learn to read words, children read and write. The same principle applies to reading music. They can start out by copying music and then playing what they write.
02. Yes
03. Yes
04. No. As long as it is not delayed TOO long. I think the priorities above should be considered more important.
05. Yes. Depends on amount of time allotted.
06. Yes
07. Yes
08. Yes
09. Yes
10. Yes
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. No
15. Yes
16. No. Only if the student is ready.
17. Yes
18. Yes. The entire first year should be devoted to correct posture, tone production, ear training and the performing of simple melodies.
19. Yes
20. Yes

**Statement 67: Additions and/or comments regarding statements 57-66 above**

01. No comment
02. No comment
03. No comment
04. Some of this might be tempered by the age of the student, but sound, pitch, and posture (including left hand shape and bow hold) are ultimately more important than reading during the first year.
05. All of this depends on amount of time allotted – [my] responses represent ideal conditions.
06. No comment
07. No comment
08. No comment
09. This is the basis for a successful first year!
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. No comment
13. No comment
14. No comment
15. No comment
16. No comment
17. No comment
18. 1st year students cannot successfully learn to read AND concentrate on correct posture and bow hold, intonation.
COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASSROOM

Statement 68: Rank 10 statements about teacher/classroom qualities

Statement 69: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. The vast majority of the success of the class depends upon the teacher’s ability to communicate the fundamentals – therefore the qualities of enthusiasm, persistence, and someone who is well-trained are de rigueur. These can go a long way to offsetting the lack of availability of quality instruments or rehearsal time or even the lack of support or indifference of parents. The teacher sets the tone by reinforcing good technique, being a good model, being consistent, monitoring effectively, etc., hence my ranking based on what the teacher needs to show and do [is] ahead of the issues of quality instruments, adequate class time and supportive parents.
03. It’s pretty hard to rank these – they are all important, but the quality of the teacher has to be #1.
04. Question #69 is almost impossible to answer in descending order. These are all valid, even essential, components and necessarily vary very much with the teacher, administration, student and parents. I assume that these were to be ranked as I have done and not individually from 1-10?
05. This is pretty bogus – all of these things are important and don’t deserve to be ranked in order.
06. I believe the key to a good program is #1, a quality teacher. #2 [would be] an administration who will support and encourage good teaching.
07. See #73
08. No comment
09. No comment
10. No comment
11. No comment
12. All of the latter are integral in providing an above string program.
13. No comment
14. What type of expectations do you mean in #69?
15. The rest I could not rank and I don’t want to pretend – they are all important, but not none more than others.
16. No comment
17. No comment
18. No comment
19. No comment
20. I would give a different answer every day for this question.
ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL TEACHER

Statement 70: Rank 10 statements about the attributes of ideal teacher

Statement 71: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. In all walks of life, people are engaged by those who communicate with passion and show their love and joy in what they do. Then must follow the energy and enthusiasm and positive attitude to see it through. You have to also love who you are communicating to, and care about them. All these things are the prerequisites. Then if the teacher can organize and structure the things to be learned and play competently so much the better but for a first-year string class I feel the communication skills and attitude come first. To engage others one must be engaged. To love others one must love oneself. I rated sense of humor lowest because our job as teachers is not to entertain and be funny and make the students laugh. We are supposed to be teaching out of joy and genuine passion and enthusiasm – humor is but one tool that can be used in that endeavor, but I would not rank it the most important. Though I feel a competent musical player is to be preferred at all levels of teaching, it is not common to see, for example, concertmasters of orchestras teach in the public schools. Sadly, it is often the case that the best players or ones that took to their instruments quite naturally and without much conscious thought about it as child prodigies, are not the best teachers because they have not had to think about how they manage this or that skill with ease so they have never had to articulate to themselves let alone others how to do such things.
03. No comment
04. Similar to above.
05. Bogus question again – all are important. And if someone has energy, enthusiasm and positive attitude, how can they NOT communicate love and passion?
06. No comment
07. See below
08. No comment
09. That last one takes time to learn – so does pacing. And, if they can’t pick appropriate music (which it seems like most can’t) LOOK OUT!
10-14. No comment
15. Nothing about being an EFFECTIVE TEACHER? This would be my #1. No response – they are all important – I can’t rank these.
16-20. No comment

Statement 72: Rank 8 statements about pace of first-year string classes
Statement 73: Additional comments

01. No comment
02. The quicker the basics are mastered the sooner real music making can happen and the more satisfying the result. Frequent classes help that goal so I rank that factor highly too.
03. No comment
04. The teacher’s greatest challenge, assuming first a well trained and capable teacher, is to constantly assess and re-evaluate their effect upon each new group of young people and not to totally rely upon sequencing and methodology as the passport to success.
05. Same comment as above
06. No comment
07. I’m sorry for not answering these questions but after reading all the responses (time consuming) to round one and answering questions to this point I found it difficult to fairly evaluate the options. My mind wanted to place them in priority order but I don’t think that is what you wanted. In my opinion, there is very little variability between many of the statements and makes it very difficult to place one variable as being more important than another. All are extremely important. Those that may be the most important deal with issues which can’t be taught. The scale seems too broad as well for me – perhaps a Likert from 1 to 5 would have been easier. Most of my potential answers would have been spread within a 3-point range. I know you would like a wider range than that. Sorry I could not have been more helpful in this area.
08. No comment
09. Every class is different and sometimes you just have to find many different ways to do the same skill over and over again.
10-14. No comment
15. This is not a strong question. I can’t answer this. The variables interact with each other.
16-20. No comment

Statement 74: If a non-string music major is being considered as a teacher for a first-year string class, should there be certain minimum requirements as a condition of being hired? (E.g., demonstration of ability to produce a good tone, play in tune, demonstrate proper instrument position and bow hold, etc.) Yes, No

01. Yes
02. Yes. ABSOLUTELY!
03. Yes. In addition, I think there should be a strong mentorship relationship in place with a competent string specialist.
04. Yes. I think a non-string playing teacher should be considered only as a very last resort.
05. Yes
06. Yes. They should also demonstrate knowledge of music and method materials and resources they might use in the community, if they are lacking skills.

07. No. Is it common practice to have auditions for all music educators in the hiring process?? Why should we single out non-string majors for string teaching positions? Should a string major be required to play a tuba if they are asked to teach band? There should be minimum requirements and expectations on the college level for receiving a teaching credential in music education!

08. Yes

09. Yes. Have them play something out of a method book and look at all of the positions. Too many “band” teachers do not pay enough attention to left hand position and straight bow strokes.

10. Yes

11. No. This is something that might seem to be a good idea. The administrator in charge of hiring string personnel must be able to determine the qualifications of a teacher without an audition. Generally most administrators are not all qualified to select a teacher based on observation of any kind of string techniques. Also objective criteria are the only legally valid means for hiring teachers in public schools, i.e. transcripts, degrees from an accredited institution, etc.

12. Yes. They need to have an understanding of both musical skills and string instruments. Many teachers, if truly dedicated to their profession, can learn on the job and be quite successful.

13. Yes. ABSOLUTELY!!!!!!!

14. Yes

15. Yes. This expectation is appropriate.

16. Yes

17. Yes. Demonstration of musicality, degree in music education, ability to work with children, real interest in teaching.

18. Yes

19. Yes

20. Yes

Statement 75: Rank 10 statements about the most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes.

Statement 76: Additional comments

01-04. No comments

05. Knowledge of how to teach the basics presumes a workable methodology.

06-13. No comments

14. Don’t understand the last one.

15. These are all important – too many ties for 1st & 2nd place.

16-20. No comments
APPENDIX R

ROUND 3 SURVEY INSTRUMENT WRITTEN RESULTS

Section I: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE WAY FIRST-YEAR STRING PLAYERS ARE TAUGHT IN THE U.S. TODAY

Question/Statement 1: What is your perception of the status of the availability of first-year string instruction in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

01. More
02. Same
03. More
04. More
05. More
06. Less
07. More
08. More
09. More
10. Same
11. Same
12. More
13. More
14. Less
15. Same
16. More
17. Same
18. Same
19. More
20. More
Question/Statement 2: Please briefly define what ROTE TEACHING in first-year string classes means to you.

01. Essentially the same concept as the Suzuki method – where repetition and modeling takes precedence over any sense of analytical or personal perceptions on the part of the student.
02. Students do not read music notation. [They] learn all music by listening and placing fingers properly.
03. Teaching without using any music or book – having them learn a skill by watching and imitating (and repeating until they get it). As far as playing songs – to me it means teaching short phrases of songs in the same manner and adding a phrase at a time until it is learned.
04. Teaching without the printed page through modeling, imitation, and ear training.
05. Rote teaching means instruction with or without books where the teacher models the phrase of song and the student imitates. This is good in all types of classes. Only Suzuki style teaching does away with all books for an extended period of time. Suzuki style teaching was originally designed for very young children and is inappropriate in classes at the 4th grade level and above.
06. Teaching done by demonstration and imitation; music taught and learned by memory as opposed to using book and reading notation.
07. An emphasis on learning by listening to a model rather than reading, although the student may be given written examples to take for practice.
08. Presentation of skill based exercises without reading standard notation which includes the staff and rhythms.
09. Ear-to-hand drills; teacher models, students replicate.
10. Should [make] use of call/response procedures more so than learning a tune simply “without notation” and relying on informational non-aural clues, like “play 2 A’s and then 3 on D, twice”.
11. Teaching simple tunes by ear or using letter names – no reading on the staff.
13. Teaching directly from teacher to student without using printed music – teacher models and student imitates.
14. [Learning] how to play based on modeling and without looking at notes.
15. Rote teaching is the process in which the teacher builds the child’s ability to match pitch and play rhythms based on imitation. Pitches, melodic and rhythm patterns are introduced with no physical pieces of music and students are not introduced to note reading. It is a good place to reinforce posture and position, bow hold, finger patterns and intonation without the complications of a printed score.
16. Majority of the work is on posture, holding of the instrument, hand position, bow hold and learning some familiar tunes.
17. Teaching through imitation of small steps followed by longer series of small steps, without use of music reading. Inappropriate for any student old enough to read/write/attend school. Appropriate for very young pre-school beginners in the
first stages of playing. NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH EAR TRAINING (or playing by ear) which is far more sophisticated [and] requires analysis & anticipation on the part of the student. Regarding question #3. I don’t know – perhaps less, as the impact of the SUZUKI approach does not play as large a role in the schools as it did a generation of teachers ago. SUZUKI, by the way, is an analytical “by ear” approach in it purist form; it has been grossly misunderstood (by its own practitioners!) who often substitute mindless “rote” teaching in place of “by ear” playing – which is the true essence of Suzuki.

18. Step by step teaching, say and sing the notes first to the students, and have them match what you are doing on the violin.

19. No books, working on basic posture and intonation with simple melodies with the use of audio equipment at home.

20. I use rote teaching to establish correct playing positions, habits, etc., before the students begin the task of reading notes. Also modeling is important all through the first year.

Question/Statement 3: What is your perception of the amount of rote teaching in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

01. More
02. More
03. More
04. Same
05. More
06. Less
07. Same
08. More
09. More
10. Same
11. More
12. More
13. More
14. More
15. More
16. More
17. No response
18. Same
19. More
20. Less
Question/Statement 4: Please briefly define what EAR TRAINING in first-year string classes means to you.

01. Pitch, rhythm and dynamic perception and identification. In the first year all three would be trained at a level suitable for a first-year student with the hope that these perceptions would be further continuously refined as the ear becomes more and more trained in subtleties.
02. Listen to example and copy. Sing music.
03. Getting a student to be able to match pitch both singing and on the instrument. Also, starting to recognize notes that are not correct in a given pitch and recognizing if they are flat or sharp.
04. Matching pitches, singing, call and response, dictation, and improvisation.
05. Ear training means listening and imitating melodies. It means humming a tune aloud or in your head and trying to play it. It means hearing intervals and being able to play those intervals. It means matching pitches and listening to the tuning notes of the instrument.
06. Teaching the ability to hear pitches, intervals, rhythmic patterns, basic harmonies, and recognize and imitate them accurately but also could include recognition and performing basic forms like a round (Row, Row, Your Boat) and differentiating the timbres of different instruments.
07. Students are able to replicate a (short) pattern – rhythmic alone at first, the melodic – modeled by the teacher. Students can sing the pieces they are working on with letter names. Students can sing a scale pattern.
08. Ear training is having students focus on pitches and rhythm removed from the music-rote experiences.
09. Built upon rote learning (see #2); also means ability to recognize high vs. low pitch, adjusting pitch to match a model, ability to replicate rhythmic figures, ability to figure out basic melodies without notes.
10. Use of call/response and singing songs and melodic patterns.
11. Call and response kinds of activities, pitch matching, and listening and responding.
13. Teaching students to hear pitches and intervals, with the goal being better intonation.
14. Learning to match pitch, adjusting fingers to play in tune, rhythmic accuracy, and good tone production.
15. Ear training is focusing on correct pitch, intervals and intonation. Ear training can be done in combination with note reading, unlike rote teaching.
16. Position of the left hand and fingers and repeating rhythms and notes played by the teacher.
17. Experimenting with & listening and learning to play melodies by ear; listening & reacting to pitch & rhythm accuracy; ability to self correct these; responding to I,
IV, & V chords by playing/anticipating notes from these chords when appropriate. Echoing lines (pitches, rhythms) back to leader. Regarding question #5: I have no way of knowing.

18. No response.
19. Imitating the teacher several times throughout the lesson. Having other students in the class involved also.
20. Generally ear training enables the student to hear and understand what is going on with the instrument. Putting together notes, tapes, [and] fingers with SOUNDS.

**Question/Statement 5:** What is your perception of the amount of ear training in first-year string classes being done in the U.S. public schools today as compared to 10-15 years ago?

01. Same
02. More
03. More
04. More
05. Less
06. Less
07. Same
08. Same
09. Same
10. Same
11. More
12. More
13. More
14. More
15. Same
16. More
17. Less
18. Less
19. Same
20. Less

**Question/Statement 6:** What is your perception of the amount of recruiting for first-year string classes in the U.S. public schools today as compared with 10-15 years ago?

01. More
02. Same
03. More
04. Same
05. More
06. Less
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**Question/Statement 7:** What is your perception of the QUALITY of recruiting for first-year string students in the U.S. public schools as compared with 10-15 years ago?

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Question/Statement 8: Do you feel that the psychology of teaching should be an important component in the training of teachers of first-year string teachers at the university level?

01. Yes
02. Yes
03. No. This class is unfortunately poorly taught and without focus in most places. I think all teachers should take a child development class and that all teachers should read Harry Wong’s book on education. Those two would do a lot more for an education student. Most of these education classes are a waste of time and that time would be better spent either observing teachers or getting experience with students.
04. Yes
05. Yes. Teachers need to be aware of the whole child rather than just whatever is necessary to teach the child to play an instrument.
06. Yes. With today’s very different family/social units that kids are raised in, teachers need to know how to handle children who don’t fit in to the typical two-parent, one parent as breadwinner family. More complicated raising kids today, teachers need to understand how this different social structure psychologically affects the students they will be teaching.
07. Yes
08. Yes
09. Yes
10. No. If you mean the psychology of learning, then “yes”, but I don’t believe there’s a psychology of teaching, per se. Some basic psychological principles are used in classroom settings (i.e., behaviorist models), but that doesn’t necessarily mean they reflect how kids learn to become musicians.
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. Yes. I can’t identify any degree programs or certificate which does not require such coursework – is this really a question?
18. Yes
19. Yes. The psychology of teaching is basic to every discipline.
20. Yes

Question/Statement 9: What do you think needs to be done, if anything, to improve the overall quality of first-year string teachers in the U.S. public schools?

01. For teachers to understand that each person being taught is an individual with their own inherent strengths and weaknesses. The teacher’s job is to approach
these issues on as personal a level as is possible in the setting with which they are confronted.

02. More extensive method class instruction. Final recital should require performance of middle school solo literature on each instrument. More String Project programs.

03. Somehow these kids need to be placed with excellent teachers when they student teach and that does not always happen! I find that an outrage because they end up learning horrible habits. In my school system the music supervisor puts out an all call on the internet and any teacher can take a student teacher. I think that is a crime! Also, universities need to be sure that they follow the NASM requirement that states that a string pedagogy class should be taught by a professor that has K-12 experience. One of the big music education schools in my state has a performance person teaching the class and he teaches things like advanced bowings and not things like how to fix common problems. When things like that get fixed, we should see some better first year teachers.

04. Learning how to individualize instruction in the group setting without compromising the experience of the most and least advanced students in the class.

05. Greater study in depth of teaching methods and materials. More time in observation of string classes. Required high achievement in performance on a string instrument. More emphasis on the importance of theory and sight singing.

06. Better and more thorough training of teachers so they truly can demonstrate proficiency (if not mastery) on the instruments they are teaching, and also better communication channels and spirit of cooperation and support between teachers, parents & administration.

07. Teachers must be trained on a stringed instrument so that they can produce a tone to be modeled. Teachers must have a sequential curriculum that allows for immediate and constant monitoring and adjusting of progress.

08. Better delivery of information and ways to develop the appropriate skills in the students.

09. Invest more quality effort training non-string (read: band, vocal) music ed majors who will likely be teaching strings as part of their load; also do the same for string performance majors who will likely be teaching beginning strings for the rest of their lives. Also, earlier and more constant hands-on field teaching experiences for music ed string majors.

10. More experience in schools with student/family diversity will challenge them to be more in charge of their professional development from an earlier stage.

11. Fine preparation at the university level, early intervention if there are problems in student teaching, effective mentorship for first and second year teachers.

12. Better string EDUCATION classes at the college level.

13. No response

14. Observation during college, mentoring during first year on job.

15. A good string pedagogy class that includes comparisons of method books, research of good first year player materials, and recruiting and motivation
techniques is essential. I am in favor of having pre-service teachers spend time in a first-year class than just the semester that they student teach.

16. Teacher preparation both as performers and musical knowledge.
17. 1) Teach them to think like ORCHESTRA directors rather than string teachers (We need to learn from the BAND Director model on this.) 2) Intensify the training for non-string majors (potential band directors). The best/fastest growing programs have teachers who are comfortable in front of large (string & full) orchestras, and large classes. Even (especially) teachers of beginning classes need to be much better at conducting & large group management & dynamics. We’ve been “small & precious” & “separate” for too long.
18. No response
19. More work needs to be done on the personality of the string teacher.
20. A stronger college-level emphasis on pedagogy and continuing string education for classroom teachers.

Question/Statement 10: Very briefly describe the METHODOLOGY (defined as: set of methods, principles, rules for regulating a given discipline) you would use in teaching a first-year string class.

01. Answer as above – the whole concept of methodology seems to presuppose a lack of concern for the individual.
02. Use a method book and prior to note reading, set up the proper technique, posture, left and right hand.
03. I use Essential Elements book for my method book and I supplement it with other recent method books. In the first year, I work to get the kids set up correctly, playing with an even tone using a straight bow and a relaxed bow hold. I use a lot of call and response to get them listening and matching pitches. The pieces they learn for the concerts are either in unison or very simple pieces like the ones that go with Essential Elements. As for discipline, we get a routine set right from the first day and that eliminates a lot of problems. (I’m not sure I read this question correctly.)
04. I focus on non-verbal modes of group instruction (manual assistance and demonstration) as well as a progressive exploration of new skills in a balanced structured curriculum (MENC Course of Study, etc.).
05. 1. Teach correct bold hold of the instrument and bow. 2. Include instruction on all strings. 3. Teach music reading by way of music writing. 4. Encourage improvisation. 5. Use a method book. 6. Teach by means of rote and reading with a lot of teacher modeling. 7. Provide opportunities for performance.
06. Teach posture, bow hold, left hand positions by rote, teach ear training and note reading skills with combination of method/instruction books and my own ideas and handouts, use analogies to other already learned skills to make the acquisition of musical skills easier and more secure. Basic foundational habits and skills in concentration are top priority.
07. 1. Start with establishment of basic positions using various rhythm patterns on open strings. 2. Add rote teaching of folk songs as developed in our school
curriculum. 3. Add note reading with letter names on the staff in proper positions. 4. Add a method book. 5. Add ensemble playing (more than one melodic line at a time). As each step is added constant monitoring is done using reward charts, practice logs and student journals. Emphasis is placed on the process so that an excellent product is the inevitable outcome.

08. Skill based – but more holistic in that students are capable of learning groups of ideas rather in small single steps of individual concepts.

09. A very broad question. I use a combination of Suzuki and Rolland techniques as organized sequentially by Culver, along with use of “String Explorer” method series and other supplementary materials.

10. Rote teaching, singing, instructional and procedural routines, peer teaching, multiage grouping, family and public presentations.

11. Establish good posture, playing position, tone production, intonation and reading skills for a limited number of notes.

12. I give the best & expect the best. I give them a weekly grade on a piece they have to play by memory. Insisting they memorize a piece makes them practice more!

13. Can’t do this “briefly”!


15. My methodology would include emphasis on correct posture and bow hold, tone production and pitch and rhythmic accuracy. I believe in introducing note reading the first year through a rote to note approach. Students are reminded that in a group lesson they are team members and that to sound good ALL students must practice, cooperate with each other and support one another.

16. A good instrument, workable environment, parent involvement, support of the administration, basic principles of playing the instrument (posture, position, etc.), use of any method book to provide a guideline.

17. I don’t understand the question – especially the “briefly” part. This is a whole ballgame & not appropriate for a brief answer.

18. No response

19. Strictly Suzuki style – no formal reading but using videos and staff paper with letters.

20. I begin with rote instruction to establish good position, bow hold, pitch, etc. I go through the Twinkle process adapted from the Suzuki method. After the students have established a good foundation I start with a traditional method book. The focus then moves to music reading and level one techniques.
Question/Statement 11: Please rate the three statements below as 1, 2, or 3 (do not use a number more than once, please!) with 1 = first choice; 2 = second choice; and 3 = third choice.

a. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on teaching basic skills (such as instrument position, posture, bow hold/stroke, left-hand shape)

01. 1
02. 1
03. 1
04. 2
05. 2
06. 1
07. 1
08. 2
09. 3
10. 1
11. 1
12. 2
13. 1
14. 1
15. 2
16. 1
17. 1
18. 2
19. 1
20. 1

b. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be on playing simple melodies

01. 3
02. 2
03. 2
04. 3
05. 3
06. 3
07. 3
08. 3
09. 2
10. 2
11. 3
12. 3
13. 3
14. 3
15. 1
16. 3
17. 1
18. 3
19. 3
20. 3

c. The emphasis in first-year string classes should be equally placed on skill development and learning simple melodies

01. 2
02. 3
03. 3
04. 1
05. 1
06. 2
07. 2
08. 1
09. 1
10. 3
11. 2
12. 1
13. 2
14. 2
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16. 2
17. 1
18. 1
19. 2
20. 2

Question/Statement 12: Theoretically (if necessary) accepting the statement: IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO BEGIN INSTRUCTION ON A STRING INSTRUMENT, how would you structure the inclusion of a student who wishes to begin later than the norm for his/her school program?

01. With sensitivity to their physical/emotional development.
02. Student must come before or after school for extra instruction, take lessons over the summer, have another student mentor the beginner.
03. I try to keep the kids within their own grade level even if I have to teach during lunch or before school. My system starts in 4th grade and I find the 5th and 6th graders move at a quicker pace.
04. Start a class of beginning students at the same age and integrate them ASAP; or give private instruction to get them started. Every program needs a point of access
at any age. Two of my best students started as HS Juniors and later became professional players.

05. I would teach the same way that I teach a young student with the expectation that he will progress at a faster rate and absorb the information more quickly.

06. I would probably try to provide some one-on-one instruction outside the class until said student was caught up and until fully able to play at same level as others. Have them do the easier version of a given exercise or to boost confidence (especially with older child not yet as advanced as younger students in the class) have them demonstrate skills to reinforce their understanding and have them be seen as a leader and a good example to others.

07. I initially place the student with other beginners. Then move him/her into an age appropriate group as soon as he/she is ready to progress with the new group.

08. Initial work outside of class to bring the basic skills to the level where inclusion will be rewarding for the new beginner. Administrators think it can work – the reality is that it is rarely successful. The new student will either be frustrated by not knowing how to do things, will have a terrible position from lack of serious attention or the advanced students will hate all the remedial attention given to the new beginner.

09. Let ’em in! I wholeheartedly agree with the statement, and make available a mechanism to allow entrance into the program whenever the decision is made. I also espouse (and currently offer) a string program for beginning adult/senior citizens.

10. In-school lessons, with peer mentoring and coaching.

11. Encourage private instruction to supplement the school program.

12. Extra individual attention before or after school. Private lessons!

13. Teach him just like any other student.

14. The same as everyone else, the key word is “begin”.

15. I would place the student in the earliest level class in which they would not be ridiculously uncomfortable. I have had success placing a fifth grader in with a class of third graders. No one was uncomfortable. I find that it is easier to place them in a setting where they will experience success, than to try to place them in a class that is over their heads and have them experience frustration. Movement from one class to another as the child progresses is always an option. I highly encourage someone joining a program later than the norm – such as an orchestra at a middle school or high school where all players have several years of ensemble experience, to study privately and/or to meet with me individually on their own time.

16. Place them in the class and just go. Maybe later discuss alternatives of other instruments.

17. It all depends on local scheduling option, facilities, staffing, etc. – there is no one answer. Depends on the situation & circumstances. Usually some accommodation (after school, tutoring, etc.) can be worked out. With pullout it is easy.

18. One-on-one lessons a few times, and consult with parents, fully understanding the requirements need to play a string instrument, student should listen to and watch the students already playing.
19. First meet with parent and student to emphasize the amount of work needed to succeed and then include them in a beginning class.

20. I would use the same basic method for all ages. It is the kind of interaction that changes with adults and older students.

**Question/Statement 13: Do you agree that the size of a first-year string class should MOSTLY be based on teacher preference and/or expertise?**

01. Yes. This question really merits a ‘maybe’ answer.
02. Yes
03. Yes
04. No. How can you ask an “and/or” question and expect a “yes/no” answer?
05. Yes. I would like to answer yes and no. A teacher without the expertise to handle large classes who nevertheless prefers large classes should not carry that responsibility. A beginning teacher with a class of 30 beginners may very well not have a good chance at succeeding whereas an experienced teacher may not want this large class but would have the expertise to make it work.
06. Yes. If the teacher is forced to teach more students at one time than is practical given the intricate nature of string teaching, the end results will suffer as well as the potential for undesirable emotional and physical strain for all concerned. The teacher needs to be able to choose what is a comfortable size. Further, it is not necessarily an advantage to recruit so heavily to acquire large numbers only to see them fall greatly due to attrition and in the process compromise the thoroughness and care of the instruction for those serious enough and ready to learn. Better to evaluate who is ready to be in a string class to begin with rather than just accept everybody. I see it as a privilege rather than a given right. In a nutshell, quality over quantity!
07. Yes
08. No. Success depends on preference and expertise but restrictions should not be put on the number of students per class just to satisfy the likes of the teachers – unless unlimited number of faculty are available to accommodate the number of students interested.
09. No. This is bad stewardship. The teacher/expert contributes to this decision, but too many other factors (economics, FTE allotment, school-district-state policies, etc.) also dictate the decision.
10. Yes
11. Yes. But, there are common sense limits to keep in mind.
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. No. We’ll get into endless variations if each teacher wants something different, the needs/possibilities of a particular school should drive this, and usually do.
18. Yes
Question/Statement 14: Briefly describe what you think would be an ideal relationship between a PUBLIC SCHOOL and a COMMUNITY SCHOOL (unrelated to public or private schools and often run by parents and/or private teachers).

01. Cannot answer that briefly in any meaningful way.
02. Share ideas; perform together or for one another. Work toward common goal to grow string playing in the community.
03. Ideally, the schoolteacher and the community teacher would have a working relationship. The community teacher would help with sectionals and lend his/her expertise when and if asked for. I find this almost never happens – the community teachers complain about the quality of public school instruction without ever seeing what goes on in a large group class.
04. Sorry, I don’t accept this definition of community school as being different from a private school. To me a community school is funded and run through community (public) resources as an alternative or enrichment of the public school.
05. A community music school? As in all joint programs, communication and open minds are essential.
06. Have the same instructors shared by both schools, do joint concerts, joint parental involvement at both schools, sponsor trips/tours to perform even if just to a local venue (such as a retirement community), possibly offer private lesson scholarships at the community school for those demonstrating a serious commitment, financial need, and talent.
07. The public school should serve as a resource to the community school. Students involved in community school programs should participate in public school performing groups and be allowed access to special honor groups sponsored by the public school music associations.
08. Mutual cooperation in all aspects of the program from when to start to special activities.
09. Too broad a question for this questionnaire. The relationship should be thick and multifaceted. Each entity should always strive to respect and complement one another by way of policy and implementation.
10. Community schools providing enrichment opportunities like chamber music, studio/jazz orchestra, and highly selective chamber orchestras; 100% scholarship for private lessons for recommended, school-selected students.
11. I am not sure what is meant by this question.
12. Lots of communication & maybe some joint programs together.
13. Good communication and support for each other’s program.
14. Community school should not be an alternative to public school programs. It gives a school board an option that should not be encouraged.
15. Coordination of curriculum is imperative. If all students are being taught the same materials, collaboration on concerts is easy and allows for student interaction in
arenas other than their classroom. The teachers at both schools must be cooperative and meet on a regular basis. There is no room for a competitive spirit between public and community schools.

16. To develop a “partnership” of all of the resources that can provide for the young children is best. This may mean that each entity (school, community, private) may have to identify their strengths and then work with the other to make the best possible situation for the students.

17. Public school programs start large numbers of beginners (representing a balanced instrumentation) helping to identify students with particular interest, talent or ability to focus and work hard. Community schools can follow with lessons for those students who wish to move beyond what the school situation can offer. Community schools should NOT recruit student in conflict with school music activities, nor should a student be led (by example) to be critical or snobbish about public school programs. Ideally each offers something the other can’t. The schools start huge numbers of students with BALANCED instruction (violas, basses) and the community schools can offer studio teaching at a level & depth most public schools cannot. Both need each other & these should never compete, nor need to compete.

18. As long as the people teaching the subjects are qualified.

19. Open dialog between the two about solo festivals, all-county orchestra events and the publishing of each other’s concerts.

20. Sharing.

Section 2: MISCELLANEOUS

Question/Statement 15: Using the variables, AGE, CLASS SIZE, FREQUENCY OF CLASS MEETINGS, LENGTH OF CLASS MEETINGS, and HETEROGENEOUS/HOMOGENEOUS class grouping, please briefly describe (may be in list format) the ideal first-year string class situation FOR YOU. In other words, list the preferred age, class size, class frequency, class length, and grouping (heterogeneous or homogeneous) for a first-year string class that you would love to teach! Add details that will help in clarification. Please presuppose that you have the dream administrative team, supportive parents, and that money, time, and physical space are at your command! Dream on…

01. Not [applicable] for [my situation].
02. Age 9 or 10; 10-12 students; 3-5 times/week; 45 minutes; heterogeneous.
03. 5th grade; 10 students; 2 times/week; 45 minutes; heterogeneous; after 5 months, add 1 time/week ensemble class.
04. 5th – 6th grade; 3 times/week; 45-50 minutes; heterogeneous groups by ability levels, plus a private lesson and large ensemble per week. Adequate facilities including storage space, office, audio-visual equipment and small practice rooms adjacent. Administration supports a “pull-out” program for the group and private lessons and the large group is scheduled during the day when classroom teachers have a prep period.
05. 4th grade, up to 15 students; 2 times/week; 40-45 minutes; heterogeneous; 1 time/week ensemble.
06. Age 5-6; 5-10 students; 4-5 times/week; 45-50 minutes; homogeneous first half of year; heterogeneous second half of year.
07. 3rd grade; 2 times/week; 30 minutes; 4-6 violins/violas, 2-3 cellos/basses per group [homogeneous].
08. 5th grade; 20 students; 3 times/week; 45 minutes; homogeneous.
09. 5th grade; 15-25 students; 5 times/week; 45-55 minutes; heterogeneous.
10. Age 8-13 in multiage groups; 4-6 students; 3 times/week; 40 minutes; homogeneous.
11. 4th grade; 8-10 students; 3 times/week; 40 minutes; heterogeneous.
12. Age 8; 10 students, max; 2 times/week – homogeneous (violin/viola, cello/bass); 1 time/week – heterogeneous.
13. 5th grade; 3 times/week; heterogeneous
14. 4th grade; 12 students; 5 times/week; 45 minutes; heterogeneous.
15. 3rd – 4th grade; 10-20 students; 45 minutes; 5 times/week – homogeneous (including a separate bass class), 2 times/week – heterogeneous. [Have] my own room always set up with stands. A blackboard and staff lined, dry erase board, CD player, video camera for taping rehearsals, instrument storage.
16. Age 5-7 years; 8 students, max; homogeneous (violin/viola). Age 6-8 years; 8 students, max; homogeneous (cello).
17. I can’t – there are several possibilities (and many variations on those) which would all work. The teacher is the greatest variable, not the setup of the program in most cases.
18. 3rd grade; 5-10 students; 2 times/week; 30 minutes; homogeneous.
19. Age 8; 1 time/week – 4 violin/violas, 3 cellos, 2 basses; homogeneous; 30 minutes; 1 time/week – group.
20. Older elementary; 3 times/week; homogeneous (violin/viola, cello)

**Question/Statement 16:** Please describe briefly, how you would introduce improvisation into a first-year string class.

01. Start with a drone note, add one or more rhythmic patterns and superimpose some kind of simple melodic figuration.
02. Lots of listen/playback to develop an ear; singing basic chord patterns; theme and variation instruction.
03. I start [by] using call and response at the first lesson to try to get them to get the hang of that. Then I ask them a question (a simple made-up phrase) and ask them to give me a different response. Then, we play telephone where they call each other doing the same thing. I will generally give them the notes they should use.
04. First [by] learning songs in various keys, then call and response imitation, then [by] learning a 12-bar blues progression along with free form improvisation (without any pitch or time parameters). This progresses to thematic and scalar variations within specific chord progressions.
05. 1. Ask children to play a song using open strings only. 2. Ask them to make up music that goes with a story using open strings and first finger. 3. Play a two-measure phrase that they can answer giving parameters of strings and fingers used. 4. Improvise “sound effects” by sliding the finger on a string. 5. Make a happy melody into a sad melody, etc.

06. Two tracks: 1) introduce by teaching scales and arpeggios in a few basic keys, then teaching the basic I, IV, V harmony and having students share roles of playing supporting harmony notes as well as playing melodic patterns fitting into those harmonies. 2) doing call and response, imitation, and introducing increasing variety in rhythmic and melodic patterns to help expand students’ ears and acquire flexibility in creating music.

07. Use fiddle tunes (key of D) to have students first improvise on open strings. Then let them make up a four - eight note melody using only the D string. Rest of [the] students improvise harmony under the improvised melodies so no child feels “on the spot”.

08. Answer games: 1st with exact answers, same rhythm, same melody; then move to different rhythms same melody (pitches); then different melody same rhythm; finally different rhythm different melody. 4-count answers expanding to 8-count answers if students can handle this length of phrase.

09. Introduce improvisation using a variety of simple fiddle tunes from diverse cultural sources, given a menu of improvisational techniques (shuffle and other bowings, slides, drones and double stops, accompaniment patterns, simple neighboring tones, ornaments, etc.); allow students to engage in arranging and orchestration; encourage use of other accompanying folk instruments. This is basically the “Fiddlers Philharmonic” model, which I would also use. Also be sure method book (as per “String Explorer”) includes improvisation.

10. Melodic ornamentation by using tunes from musical styles in which ornamentation/improvisation is authentic; also harmonic-based improvisation similar to the harmonic changes from their known tunes, but NOT “blues”.

11. Learn a simple melody; try it on a different string or starting on a different finger.

12. Call & answer. Get a simple piece that has places for improvisation – bring in a Randy Sabien as a guest or use some of his books.

13. Would not do this.

14. Change rhythm to familiar tunes and change beginning note (heterogeneous classes encourage this).

15. I would introduce improvisation first rhythmically, [and] then through 4 beat patterns using the lower tetrachord of a D major scale in a question and answer format. This would then be expanded to the upper tetrachord and then to the entire scale. Another way would be through improvising rhythmic variations on simple melodies that they learned by rote. I would also use simple fiddle tunes such as Bile ‘Em Cabbage Down and Cripple Creek.


17. Echo & response, unpitched rhythm over a rhythm track, pitched over a drone, tonic rhythm over blues progression, I, IV, V [chord] notes over blues progression, melodic over drone, Jamie Adersold exercises.
18. Have students play simple tunes first, knowing the notes, have them write a simple melody next and play, then using the notes learned, create a simple piece on the spot, but give them a choice of notes, it needs to be as specific as possible—rhythm and note values used.

19. I introduce it briefly with a song called “Moon Rock”. Students create “moon sounds” and embellish the main theme.

20. I use the tune “Hot Cross Buns”. After the students have learned the song they can improvise on the first 3 notes.

Question/Statement 17: Please describe, briefly, how you think the skill of note reading should be handled in a first-year string class. E.g., should notes be placed in front of the student at a certain point (when?); or, should there be preparation (pre-reading work) before notes are placed in front of the student; or, etc.

01. I think the Suzuki principal of concentrating upon the mechanics of playing and the development of aural skills is a good one, but I do think that some reading skills should be incorporated fairly early.

02. Hand out materials initially with larger notes and easy to read notation. [Have] students physically write notes. [Have] students say note names in rhythm of music. [Have] students sing note names. I think a few weeks into the class reading can be introduced. Part of the lesson should still focus on rote with emphasis on technique.

03. I think students should do some pre-reading work like learning spaces and lines, low and high, skips in intervals for their clef. I introduce open string note reading before using fingered notes. We start actually reading the notes at the same point as used in EE. I have them fill out a note chart so they have to draw the note and label it. I do not let them write in note names or fingerings (the exception being made for LD students).

04. There is no such thing as pre-reading work. It’s rote or not rote. Students should only be asked to read music that contains skills which they can do by rote. This is a process that is PARALLEL to ear training and improvisation.

05. Place the notes in front of the child. While the teacher plays the melody two or three times, the child should follow the notes by pointing below them. Then ask the child to play the melody. He may be playing entirely by rote, but he has the option of looking at the notes and develops a sense of the flow of notes on the page with the sounds he makes. He should also be introduced to writing notes on the staff using only the notes that he is able to play.

06. Pre-reading work: acclimating the eyes to the musical staff and the symbols on the page, perfecting note recognition on a given string first before widening the range.

07. Pre-reading of letter names on the staff should precede actual note reading. Students should be allowed to write in letter names of notes (not finger numbers) when they are first learning to simplify the task.

08. Depending on the age group, students can handle reading standard musical notation from the beginning. If a non-standard musical notation is introduced, a
transition period will be required. Why not eliminate it? Students need to learn to
read notation. Letters or numbers may help with very young students, but if they
read them for too long, the transition will be difficult; it’s kind of like playing f-
sharp for 6 months [and] then trying to get students to play a good f-natural.
09. Rote learning (ear to hand via teacher model) is introduced; then basic symbology
(“floating” notes in rhythmic patterns) paired with rote or symbolic pitches; then
these are applied to the staff. Concept is [to] go from known to unknown. This
system is captured in “String Explorer” method.
10. Students would notate the songs and drill etudes that have been taught aurally in
class.
11. I believe in establishing note names right away and using finger numbers on a
limited basis. Then I like to introduce several notes, stepwise, at a time on the
staff. I use flashcards and note naming with the staff a lot. I try not to wait too
long for note reading, or it becomes too difficult to teach. And it is perfectly OK
to continue to do modified rote teaching along with some note reading, and
gradually bring kids along until all are reading!
12. Teach by rote & note reading [on] open string right away. Have them singing the
notes first before playing them. Use flash cards, writing the notes on the staff
from the very 1st day. Follow “Essential Elements” sequence for learning notes.
13. Rote teaching of several songs before note reading.
14. As in reading words, after songs are known, this is what it looks like. Also, the
fingerboard must be mentally labeled with alphabet names, not finger numbers.
15. Note reading should be introduced as soon as the student is holding the instrument
properly and comfortably. Even though this may take quite a bit of time, I would
not delay not reading. An effort must be made to continue reinforcement of
technique as well as note reading. I would introduce notes on a staff as opposed to
letter names on a page only. I have mixed feelings about placing the letter inside
the note head, as I have found that students come to rely on these if they are used
for any extended amount of time. Simple flash cards identifying note names and
how to play those notes may be used as preparation prior to beginning note
reading in a method book. Reading notation that is predominantly stepwise is an
easier way to work on note reading skills, than is introducing the skips too early.
16. A book, notes, discussion, relation with the instrument, this should be part of the
classes from the beginning.
17. Kids should already know this from General Music! It depends on what students
have previously learned & been exposed to: if General Music is strong & based
on literacy, note reading can come earlier. If kids play piano, an infrastructure
(both eye & ear) is in place already.
18. Definitely in the beginning, the sooner the better; they will have to learn to read
music at some point and they should be exposed to it early.
19. [I use] pre-reading, only, the 1st year, using letters on a large staff – talking
rhythm patterns – much coordination with vocal teacher.
20. Reading is very important, but needs to be presented slowly after good position
and basic technique is established. I don’t like using letters but most methods start
that way.

260
Question/Statement 18: Please describe, briefly, what the statement “A FINE STRING PROGRAM” means to you.

01. One which enables each student to have a sense of self-worth and which is being taught by a thoughtful and capable teacher.
02. A well balanced group of string players. Students have good fundamental technique. Students are excited and enthusiastic. Students perform with excellent intonation and are able to read music notation.
03. A fine string program = students that play with good intonation, tone, good positions, and with signs of musicianship. A good high school program can play standard string literature and have it be done at a high quality level. An elementary program should be balanced and the students should have a basic understanding of ensemble work and musicianship. Intonation must be good – there is no excuse for this to be poor.
04. No way to briefly describe this other than what I described above.
05. The “ideal first year” as described above followed by a similar 2nd year. Opportunities for string orchestra and beginning class instruction on a daily basis in the middle school. Several levels of string orchestra in the high school with the top group meeting at the same time as top band so that wind players can be introduced into the orchestral setting.
06. A fine string program is one in which the teacher has enabled students to truly know that they are making music solidly and deliberately with knowledge and understanding. It means setting a high standard and practicing what one preaches as a teacher. It means observing to the hilt to discern the individual and collective needs of the class and always letting the students know you believe in their abilities, their hard work, and the lofty and worthy pursuit of making beautiful music. This can be achieved without being a dictatorial taskmaster and without giving into complacency and easy fixes. The teacher who expects much and lives by that example will gain the trust and respect of the students and ultimately have the most satisfied students. If one glosses over details, gives in to the struggle or gives up feeling overwhelmed, the students will sense this and given human nature choose the path of least resistance. Set the challenges and human beings will rise to the occasion. A fine string program is only as fine as the determination of the teacher to give every student the benefit of his or her knowledge and expertise. To give less is to lower your expectations and to risk treading water, therefore a fine string program also must include a teacher seeking to learn more and discover anew as well.
07. A dedicated, competent teacher with students excited about playing a stringed instrument. An administration that supports the program. Resources to provide equipment and instruction to all interested students not just those who can afford it financially. A program that is known in the community as one that demands excellence, demonstrates excellence and encourages excellence within the program.
08. A fine string program has administration support, parental support, and quality outcomes – small attrition rates and students participating in respectable numbers
in honor groups such as all-region, all-state, etc. This type of program will produce enrollments that are sufficient to maintain the standard year to year.

09. [A fine string program] is supported, sequential, offers constant instruction throughout the school years with trained teachers, and implements comprehensive musicianship.

10. [A fine string program is one where] kids enjoy playing music on strings and their performance would be viewed by experts in that music as being “excellent” representations of that style. The program would involve students who represent a proportional cross section of the school building population with regard to learning ability, gender, social class, and race/ethnicity.

11. A fine string program is one in which outstanding teachers have the parent and administrative support to develop fine quality playing at all levels.

12. A well-trained teacher with very supportive administrators & parents. The teacher should be dedicated, enthusiastic, love to teach, be a fine player & above all, LOVE children!

13. [A fine string program] has good teaching, parental support, and community support.

14. [A fine string program has] about 13% of the student body enrolled, classes meet every day in a music room, and the kids have good physical and musical skills.

15. The class is taught by a highly qualified and motivated individual. There is a balance of instrumentation within the group. Students follow a well-structured curriculum and meet on a regular basis (more than once a week). The students play with accurate intonation, rhythmic precision, and excellent tone quality. Students are motivated to practice and opportunities to demonstrate what they know are abundant (this does not mean formal concerts, but may include performances for other groups of students or for each other in class). The program should be sequential, so that students know that they may continue study of their instrument and that it is a lifelong process and enjoyment.

16. [A fine string program has] good-sized classes, good presentations, an overall display of good posture, hand positions and in tune.

17. A fine ORCHESTRA program is really the issue. A fine ORCHESTRA program is well integrated into the total music program and numbers/organization reflects parity with the BAND program. Briefly – a lot of kids are playing a balanced variety of string instruments well, participating in string & full orchestra, chamber music and as individual players.

18. Covers a genre [of] music, and consists of instruments from the instrument family, not just one group.

19. [A fine string program is] one whose students have excellent basic skills, play in tune, perform good literature, have school & community support and have outstanding teachers.

20. In a fine string program students read simple level 1 music with good technique, good pitch, and good sound.
Question/Statement 19: Please describe, briefly, what specific efforts, in your opinion, should be made for the improvement of first-year string classes.

01. No response
03. More attention needs to be paid to intonation – a group with poor intonation kills the program. Teachers need to learn how to program – I have seen people use very poor judgment in this area and that also kills a program. So teachers need to learn more about good intonation, music selection and getting the basics set.
04. Continuing education for teachers as well as tangible rewards for those who do it very well.
05. String instructors. Supervision and mentoring provided by qualified string teachers. Guidance in methods of instruction.
06. More thorough attention to basic posture, bow hold, and left hand; greater care in introducing reading from the printed page (not too early!!!!!), and a concerted effort on the part of all teachers in the fine arts to rally together and meet with parents, administrators, etc., and politically active to keep pushing for the arts to be given their fair due. When the arts are respected in today’s educational environment as they were in ancient Greece, then we will have parity and a chance for excellence throughout all the nation’s schools.
07. We must have trained teachers and a sequentially based program that teaches skills while allowing for constant monitoring of the students’ progress.
08. Establish standards/goals to be achieved, measure progress, report to administration and parents.
09. More time with trained instructors.
10. More singing.
11. The key to improving any instruction is in providing quality teaching. Following that is the support necessary for funding, scheduling, and valuing of the program.
13. No response
14. Facilities and class size guidelines.
15. Scheduling for maximum productivity. Often first year string classes meet only once a week which is definitely NOT enough time. In my experience, the classes often meet in cafeterias and hallways and other rooms [not] conducive to student learning. This has impact on the morale of the students, as well as how important the subject is viewed. After all, when is the last time you saw math class being held in a boiler room, where the students had to go and get their own desks before class and then put them away afterwards, all in a given 30 minute instructional block (which, by the way, meets only once a week). Oh, I almost forgot – math books don’t need to be tuned! I guess I mean that facilities, priority to good scheduling, and respect for the subject are essential to improving classes taught by a good string teacher.
16. Better teacher preparation, better administration knowledge of the program.
17. Give pre-service teacher a bigger bag of tricks (ability to work in more than one type of setting with comfort in more than one particular method book or materials). Balance the instrumentation and spend more time with RIGHT HAND skills as well as good posture, intonation & focused tone.
18. All that has been talked about above, class size and time, money, parent involvement, after and or before school programs as well as local community group youth symphonies.
19. [Classes] must be taught in [a] homogeneous group with NO formal reading.

**Question/Statement 20:** Please describe, briefly, how information, such as research results, might be more effectively distributed to teachers of first-year string classes.

01. Professional organizations.
02. ?? All teachers should belong to their professional organizations to read current data. All teachers registered with MENC who are teaching strings should be encouraged or required to also join ASTA with NSOA.
03. Give better examples that are realistic as to what works and does not work. Distribution – through the ASTA journal, MENC and state organizations as well as to know music supervisors.
04. The information must be packaged and delivered to the classroom by those who understand the nature of both areas – college teachers with public school know-how.
05. State and regional in-service training run by highly qualified clinicians.
   Dissemination of important research through state music teachers association.
06. I’m not sure what is already being done, but some things to be sure would be the publishing of results in as many music educator journals as possible, posted online, and made available to all music schools at the preparatory and college levels, especially to music education majors. Perhaps a course needs to be added to the curriculum of music education majors along the lines or “What every first year string teacher needs to know” (including how to handle heterogeneous/homogeneous classes, classes of various ages and sizes, classes of varying socio-economic backgrounds, etc.).
07. Many such reports are readily available through ASTA and MENC. Teachers should be encouraged to examine these reports. State leaders and string chairs should alert members when new reports become available.
08. The first problem is that much research has a tendency to report what to fix, not how to fix it. The question also pre-supposes that research results are distributed to teachers of first-year students. That in and of itself may not be true. If first year students belong to their music education or other professional organizations, the appropriate journals are the most likely avenue of distribution.
09. Through ASTA resources – state and local chapters – as well as periodicals, websites, etc.
10. Involve them in their own conducting of “action research”; generate their interest from their experience.
11. I am not sure. We have journals and the web available, but unfortunately, often our time is so limited that reading research results is not a priority.
12. Web sites with this info provided!
13. No response
14. ASTA publications, state MEA publications, [and] Internet web pages.
15. I can only think of the standard ways: publication in professional journals, on related websites, professional development sessions. Perhaps a web group or email subscription that would let teachers know of important updates would help.
16. Information must be short, concise, and well presented in order to gain the attention of the very busy teacher.
17. Articles in MENC or ASTA Journals. Direct mailing order, separate cover – but who would sponsor this? Web access?
18. Through an Internet website that teachers can utilize at all times.
19. Through ASTA programs.
20. Teachers should utilize organizations such as ASTA, MENC to meet & exchange information.

**Question/Statement 21:** What suggestions do you have for improving the preparation of first-year string class teachers?

01. Unfortunately there is no substitute for experience. I think that supervised teaching can be helpful, but the creative teacher is, in my opinion, born not made!
02. More experience in the classroom at all levels. Knowledge and facility to play all the instruments.
03. Have reading sessions in college classes with discussion on key signatures that work for younger students (including extensions for viola/cello that some beginning publishers insist on using). More experience on secondary instruments, more experience on bass. Working with students before student teaching and being given suggestions on how to improve what they are doing (like the ASTA STRING PROJECTS do).
04. Early teaching experiences that are monitored and guided by current practical and theoretical perspectives.
05. Previously answered. I would like to emphasize that they need first of all to be highly qualified musicians who love children. More emphasis on methods and materials of instruction.
06. Assign private lessons throughout the course of undergraduate teaching degree work (perhaps each of four years devoted to one of the four bowed members of the string family, all of them being covered in turn. A short 8-12 week course of instruction on all bowed strings, as is the case with some education degrees is simply unacceptable. In any other discipline this would be seen as folly and lip service to the idea of truly educating the student. Do lawyers take two weeks of contract law, and then a couple weeks of property law, etc. – no, learning to play a
string instrument with reasonable proficiency takes much more time and to be entrusted with teaching it to a future generation, one must reach a certain level. In this area in particular, much overhaul is needed to bring music education majors up to a decent standard.

07. College students need to be given many experiences in beginning students in group classes (not just Suzuki one-on-one classes) under the mentoring of established teachers with set curricula. Just as students are monitored, student teachers need to be provided with immediate feedback and monitoring of their teaching. College students should be taught how to develop a curriculum and how to modify an established curriculum so it works for them.

08. More student teaching with appropriate “buzz” sessions to discuss what did and did not work and why. Experience is a great teacher! Those entering the field should have some work/teaching in the classroom for a minimum of 3 years before graduation.

09. Suggestions are imbedded in previous answers.

10. No response

11. String educators need to spend more time mentoring and preparing students. A quick methods class and limited supervision of student teaching is not enough.


13. No response

14. More observation during undergraduate [years].

15. An excellent string pedagogy class in the teacher’s background, or independent research into methods and practices (workshops, etc.). A good introduction to various method books and supplemental materials is necessary. Study of the national, state, and local content standards and objectives for first year string students assists in preparing a solid standards-based first year string class.

16. The best possible preparation on the performance on their instrument.

17. Semantics are everything in survey design. Question is unclear – are the teachers in their first year of teaching? Or, a teacher’s 25th year of teaching first-year classes?

18. Be in a location with significant stimuli that enhances student’s abilities. A strong teaching environment other than what was discussed previously regarding time and class size.

19. Need experienced and successful teachers speaking to college students explaining the “reality” of the string world.

20. More courses in methods, pedagogy, and observation of good teachers at work.

**Question/Statement 22:** In your opinion, what specific courses for the preparation of first-year string teachers should be included in university/college training?

01. Psychology

02. One semester of private instruction on every string instrument besides their own. String Project Recital performance on each instrument.

03. Class on discipline, class on special education kids and how to work with them effectively, a string pedagogy class that includes things like recruiting,
improvisation, selecting appropriate literature, correcting common problems (more than one semester).

04. Technique classes on every instrument which includes performance and pedagogy. Group teaching methodology and guided field experience.

05. Methods and materials. Classes to learn to play each of the string instruments. Ability to play simple accompaniments on the piano. Music theory, sight singing and a class in improvisation.

06. Private string instruction, education theory, psychology of teaching, and observation/field work – the latter should be required every semester to include seeing string classes over time and at all levels (elementary, secondary, etc.) and from different socio-economic regions.


08. String methods and materials, pedagogy, score analysis and conducting in a workshop environment.

09. String methods (1 year minimum); string pedagogy and practicum, etc. (plus typical music education course background).

10. See previous answer about experience in schools with diverse populations.

11. Methods classes oriented specifically for string teachers, private lessons on all string instruments, literature selection classes, coursework in child and adolescent psychology as well as classroom management, and many opportunities for hands-on teaching experiences. This would be in addition to the typical undergraduate music classes such as music literature and theory and conducting.

12. A string EDUCATION class taught by a person who is has had a SUCCESSFUL strings program in the public schools, not just by a professor who is a fine player or a grad student who has never taught in the schools. Just because you are fine strings player does not make you qualified to teach a string class at the college level. You need someone who has been in the “trenches” to teach this course. (Included should be information about recruitment, good beginning pieces to use, problems the beginner has & how to solve them, method books that have been successful, discipline problems & how to solve, how to keep students motivated, etc., etc, etc.)

13. String techniques and methods, orchestral methods, internship student teaching for an entire semester.


15. Two separate string methods classes. One in which each pre-service teacher learns to play each of the string instruments and another in which they learn pedagogy, methods, resources and are provided with classroom experience in the community. Nothing replaces authentic experiences with children!

16. They should have intimate knowledge of the literature of the instrument including concertos, solos, chamber music and orchestra excerpts as a basis even though they may be teaching “Twinkle”.

17. ORCHESTRA Methods – like Band Methods, which stress conducting, large group skills & management, CONDUCTING, skill examinations on all four string
instruments, introduction to several class methods, play teach, conduct, keep files on full & string orchestra literature at several rehearsal levels, teach/coach individual as well as class lessons (like or heterogeneous). I. Orchestra Methods, 1-2 semesters (ideally 4 semesters total), Conducting, Literature at various levels, Contest/Festival preparation, Large Group Management, FULL Orchestra Skills (skill on at least 1 wind instrument). II. String Methods 1-2 Semesters. Class Methods, Literature for Solos, Etudes & 1 instrument, Technique for Heterogeneous & Homogeneous Grouping, Intermediate to Advanced Skills on at least 1 instrument, Pass exams on all 4 instruments (read alto & tenor clef). Prepare Solo Literature, Coach Chamber Music.

18. More than one class, more time on each specific instrument, playing and listening, attending classes where string classes are being taught, so observing can be very important.

19. Acting course to develop more “spark” in personality.

20. Suzuki techniques, basic string repair & maintenance, class violin, cello, viola, bass, string pedagogy.

Section 3: COMPONENTS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUCCESSFUL FIRST-YEAR STRING CLASS.

Question/Statement 23: Do you agree that the two most important components for success in the first-year string classroom are: 1) Teacher who is qualified, persistent, enthusiastic, and well trained; and, 2) Adequate class time and space? Yes, No

01-20. Yes

Question/Statement 24: Do you agree that the two most important attributes (among others) of a first-year string teacher are: 1) Is able to pace a lesson appropriately; and, 2) Has a sense of humor? Yes, No

01. Yes. These are important but there are others equally important.

02. Yes

03. Yes

04. No. Not [one] of the most important. You have to know what is correct and to communicate it.

05. Yes

06. I am truly baffled at the “sense of humor” comment. Would this attribute even have been considered with regard to evaluating the qualities of a math, English or science teacher? If by that it is meant the teacher should lighten up from time to time and not get angry over mistakes or be stern and unkind, well of course one must find a balance between asking and expecting the very best and realizing the students are still kids and can’t be expected to handle adult pressures yet, but we are not comedians first and foremost. I am not saying one must be dull and severe but our primary goal is to give something solid to the students, not to be preoccupied with whether our message is entertaining enough. The teacher who
cracks lots of jokes may in the short term have a class that finds him/her fun, but when it gets down to actual performance and sense of accomplishment, those kids will wish their teacher had been stricter or worked the class more instead of taking time up with shooting the breeze and being chummy and cool and telling jokes, etc. Students know when they are getting a lot for their time or when it is being wasted. This is a big problem in America, the land of dumbing down the message, of too many choices, too much emphasis on “is it fun”. Does a parent constantly crack jokes and provide fun and entertainment to their children? Of course they want their children to be happy but they also must try to raise them to grow up to be solid and contribute to the world for the better. Teachers fall into the same category. There is important work to be done and a better balance than the one I perceive many have fallen into needs to be found between working hard and relaxing. I will not agree that a sense of humor is one of the two most important attributes for a teacher to have. NO! However, if you changed the attribute to “sense of fairness and respect for the students, or ability to assess student needs” I would then agree and think that the ability to allow for a relaxed atmosphere on occasion is part of those qualities.

07. No. I think a firm foundation in teaching pedagogy is more important than a sense of humor.
08. No. Is able to develop a good lesson plan which includes appropriate skill development, reinforcement, and fun experiences – a paced lesson may or may not include these elements.
09. Yes.
10. No. Passion is more important than either of these.
11. No. Although a sense of humor is important, I wouldn’t put it at the top of the list.
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. No. These are important, but MOST important?
18. Yes
19. No. Most important are teaching skills of each instrument and perseverance to ensure the goals set forth are accomplished.
20. Yes

**Question/Statement 25:** Do you agree that the pace of a first-year string class is mostly determined by: 1) Age of students, 2) Length of class time, 3) Class size, and 4) Frequency of class meetings? Yes, No

01. Yes
02. Yes
03. Yes
04. Yes
05. Yes
06. Yes. Not sure I agree with the order, but YES to those 4 factors.
07. Yes
08. Yes. However, those who have taught for a while would surely state that progress differs from class to class and year to year. Some classes just seem to move faster than others.
09. Yes
10. Yes. Pace is always determined by the teacher; but do you mean based on those 4 characteristics? Yes.
11. Yes
12. Yes
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. How is this a yes/no question? Why are those variables numbered? This is confusing. All are factors – none more than any of the others.
18. Yes
19. Yes
20. Yes

**Question/Statement 26:** Do you agree that the most important steps that need to be taken to improve first-year string classes are: 1) Be sure that those teaching first-year string classes are well-trained, 2) Get support from administrators to provide adequate teaching time, and 3) Get support from administrators to provide adequate facilities? Yes, No

01-20. Yes

**Question/Statement 27:** How valuable/helpful were the comments of the other panelists from previous rounds of the survey to you? Not Very Helpful, Helpful, Very Helpful

**Question/Statement 28:** Did reading the comments of other panelists in one survey round guide your responses in the next survey round? Yes, No

**Question/Statement 29:** How many years have you taught a first-year string class? (It may non-consecutive years; it may have been years ago.)

**Question/Statement 30:** In which age group, listed below, do you belong?

**Question/Statement 31:** What is the highest degree you have earned?
Question/Statement 32: What is the title of your current position?

Question/Statement 33: May I list your name as a participant in this survey? (No references to responses will ever be made.)

Question/Statement 34: Would you like a copy of an EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of these surveys (Rounds 1-3)? It will be sent sometime in June.

Question/Statement 35: Do you have any additional comments about this survey?
LIST OF REFERENCES


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