THE TEACHING OF STRING INSTRUMENTS IN THE UPPER ELEMENTARY GRADES

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INTRODUCTION

When in 1957 the Russians sent up Sputnik I, the United States suddenly became overly conscious about the lag in science and math in our schools. The arts were all but neglected in the rush to catch up in the "space race."

We have not yet caught up in dramatic achievements in space, although there is some argument in favor of our technical advance in space probes. But we have regained a saner balance of education in which the arts are taking their proper place. Music is one of the most expressive of these arts, having several media of expression. The medium with which schools are becoming increasingly involved is that of instrumental music. However within the instrumental program string classes are occasionally neglected. This may be due to several factors, one of them being a general lack of acquaintance with the possibilities a string program can offer. And this may include the non-realization that elementary school is the place in which such a program should be begun.

This paper will, therefore, try to describe many
aspects of a string\textsuperscript{1} instrument program that are possible in an elementary school. It will be a general overview of the values of such a program, the means of developing a program, and methods of conducting a string class.

\textsuperscript{1}Despite its use as an adjective, the word string did not have the usual ad form in any of the writings upon which this paper was based. Therefore string instruments rather than stringed instruments will be used throughout this paper.
I. THE PLACE of INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC in ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Values of Instrumental Program

One of the first things to consider is the place of the instrumental program in an elementary school. Of what value is it to the child? And what are the particular values that string instruments offer?

To consider the latter question first, one must consider the advantages which are related to the development of the appreciation of music in the United States which string instruments hold. Morgan in *Music in American Education* suggests that there is now a greater acceptance of and an appreciation for good music. And he believes that because of the rise in ticket sales to musical events, in record sales, of music sales, etc., music is a profitable business. Many of these musical events feature symphonies, oratorios, operas, etc. These depend on the orchestra, which is composed of 70% strings. Therefore, demand probably equals, if not exceeds, the supply of string players—whose training should begin rather early.

Dykema and Cundiff have suggested certain advantages

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in the study of string instruments which might be more evident to the child. String instruments, they maintain, are somewhat less fatiguing to play than are the wind instruments. Therefore in an orchestra the parts for the wind instruments contain many rests while those for the strings have few, thus providing continuity and giving the string instruments generally more interesting parts. The authors, too, go so far as to suggest that because string instruments can be played by both bowing and pizzicato, they are more versatile.3

Morgan offers other reasons for preferring strings to other instruments. For one thing, much is written for string groups of all sizes and abilities. Secondly, strings blend well with any ensemble and are good accompaniment instruments. Also violins are available in half and three-quarter sizes, which means a child of any size could play an instrument which would fit his size. A fourth advantage is that students get good ear training through playing string instruments, due to the open fingerboards on string instruments which have no set stops for notes as those on most wind instruments. And finally there is a great opportunity for talented and industrious students to advance.4

Morgan offers the following eight areas of the child's life which will be enriched by participation in an instru-


4 Morgan, 167.
mental music program: performance, musical, social, cultural, personality, physical, professional, and hobby. Into these eight areas all the values suggested in other writings neatly fit.

Performance, the first area listed above, is considered by Morgan to be the most important one, because learning to play the instrument is the initial and ultimate goal of the student. This is the goal which sustains the child's interest and rewards him when he learns to play the instrument.

The second area is the musical value that a string program can so effectively afford a child. As was just mentioned, strings make up the bulk of the orchestra and are generally considered to be the most important section in an orchestra. Strings are also very important as instruments for chamber music. Because string players are brought into contact with music of a high caliber, this is an important type of music that is written for strings. And playing an instrument provides an effective and enjoyable way of teaching notation, rhythm, meter, etc., as well as preparing for sight singing and preparing for the creative activity of composition.

Every part has a noticeable importance, and to be able to play well requires a lot of work from a person. Therefore a person who can perform adequately will not be lazy in this

5Ibid., 169-71. 6Ibid., 169-70.
7Ibid., 170. 8Dykema and Cundiff, 275.
respect. And an outstanding performing ability commands a
type of prestige that can override usual social barriers.9

An important area this type of program will affect is
the cultural area. Even though a person will not become a
professional, he gains a better understanding and an appreci-
ation for good music through exposure to it when learning an
instrument in school. Morgan goes as far as to state that
"active participation on a string instrument is one of the
best and most thorough routes to a cultural understanding of
good music."10 What better way could a child from a culturally
deprived area become involved actively in such music or
one from a culturally advanced home find some measure of en-
richment for what he already enjoys?

Morgan also gives the instrumental program a great
deal of credit for affecting the child's complete personality:

The continuous association with people in groups at
rehearsals, concerts, banquets, etc., gives the stu-
dent an opportunity to develop many personality traits
far removed from music. His manner and taste in dress,
evaluation of friendships, and his ability to meet
and converse with people will be influenced.11

Morgan also feels that "... class instruction and ensemble
participation afford a real sense of feeling of accomplish-
ment."12 And for a self-conscious child, playing an instrument
is often easier than singing, because the instrument is not as
personal as the voice. The objective here is not so much the

9Morgan, 170. 10Ibid.
11Ibid., 170-71. 12Ibid., 165.
production of sound as it is the feeling acquired when playing.\textsuperscript{13}

The physical development of a child is not neglected with an instrument. Through training, a person's ear will grow in ability to distinguish pitch and quality. And his muscular system develops an agility and a sensitivity to rhythms.\textsuperscript{14}

The professional values of a string program may seem negligible at the elementary level, but for the far-seeing child with professional goals in the field of music are many job opportunities at reasonable salaries. Such opportunities include, besides that of a professional orchestra member, "... television, radio, summer opera, solo concert engagements, and teaching."\textsuperscript{15} The elementary grades are not too early to begin preparations for careers in these areas.

And for the child not intending to become a professional the program will lay the basis for his forming a hobby later on, such as one of collecting, studying, making, or repairing string instruments. Or he can participate in small groups as by being a member of the National Association of Amateur Chamber Music Players.\textsuperscript{16}

The instrumental program, therefore, enriches the child's musical experience while he has the time to advance and the flexibility to do so. It involves the whole child, rather than just his voice, and provides creative use of his leisure

\textsuperscript{13}Morgan, 171. \textsuperscript{14}Ibid. \textsuperscript{15}Ibid. \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
Finally the program is a transition between the primary rhythm band and the junior and senior high orchestras, which may serve as preparation for a musical profession.

Purposes of a String Program

The values of an elementary string class should by now seem evident, but the quality of such a class will determine the extent to which these values are realized.

Leonhard, in his article "The Place of Music in Our Elementary and Secondary Schools," suggests that to justify the existence of an elementary instrumental program in a school, the program must make

... a significant difference in the pupil's conception of music, his understanding of it, and his competence with it. The purposes of music education, therefore, are achieved only when a music program results in musical learning that would not take place without it.17

Leonhard also believes that basic skills should be learned in the primary grades and refined and enriched by challenging activities in the intermediate grades.

To insure a good program, there should be certain beginning aims. For one thing, every child should be allowed to participate. In this case the outstanding student and the child with no talent will drop out, the talented child to seek professional help. Secondly the program should not attempt

to create soloists but rather should teach an entertaining hobby. And finally, to do this well, the child must have sound teaching in fundamentals so that there is nothing to "unlearn."

Robert House in *Instrumental Music for Today's Schools* has elaborated upon the objectives of an instrumental program, which would include the following items:

Knowledge of:
1. musical literature from all periods and idioms,
2. basic musical patterns and usages,
3. musical vocabulary and meanings,
4. music's development as an art,
5. the principal forms and composers.

Understanding of:
1. problems in performing and learning to perform,
2. the elements of good musical interpretation,
3. the general methods by which music is constructed.

Skill in:
1. producing a rich tone with acceptable intonation,
2. playing with reasonable facility and accuracy,
3. performing by ear,
4. reading music of appropriate difficulty,
5. performing with others, independently, yet in proper relation to the ensemble,
6. hearing and following the main elements of musical composition.

Attitudes of:
1. musical broadmindedness and the necessary discrimination of quality,
2. respect for music as an art and a profession,
3. intention to improve one's musicianship.

Appreciation of:
1. skilled and tasteful performance,
2. good music in any medium, style, or period.

Habits of:
1. frequent and efficient individual practice,
2. proper selection and care of instruments,
3. participating wholeheartedly in musical groups,
4. proper rehearsal attendance, deportment, and attention,
5. selecting good recordings, searching for more musically satisfying radio and TV programs, and attending worthwhile concerts.18

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Problems of Beginning Instrumental Program

But even with such well-defined objectives, beginning an instrumental program presents several problems that touch all aspects of the program. For one thing, music departments may receive little or no funds from their schools. This forces the music director to supervise fund-raising activities. For general equipment Dykema and Cundiff suggest that the school be responsible for purchasing such items as supplementary portable stands and a variety of instructional materials at each level, providing room for storage of instruments, and making provisions for regular service and repair of instruments.19 The purchase of instruments might be accomplished by donation or by parents and, if necessary, by fund-raising. The director should not have the responsibility of purchasing all the instruments, but he should advise the purchase. Perhaps discounts with large orders would be granted.20

One of the first problems of a beginning program is to develop sufficient interest in the program. The director needs the support of the school administration, principal, teachers, parents, community, and the intelligence and support of the children. This support can be generated by informing the people through articles and demonstrations.21

Another initial problem, which will be dealt with

19Dykema and Cundiff, 283.
20Ibid., 282-83. 21Ibid., 281-82.
later, is screening applicants for class membership. Directors must decide whether to allow anyone to play or to employ rigid entrance requirements to their classes.

The two problems causing the most controversy in a school are the time and place allotted for rehearsal. Because music programs often are not included in the regular curricula, children affected have to go early or to stay after school. Some authors feel that this is an unsatisfactory arrangement. Dykema and Cundiff, however, suggest that students could divide their rehearsal time into half in school and half out. This would be necessary if their recommended amount of time for rehearsal—forty to sixty minutes—was carried out. Dykema and Cundiff also recommend a separate classroom for music but admit that any large area could be functional.\(^22\)

A final major problem concerns the organization and instruction of the program. The problem of instruction, according to various authors, is whether to train a child for position in a band or orchestra or to educate the musical thinking and feeling of a child. Various opinions concerning this problem will be dealt with more fully later.

\(^22\)Ibid., 234.
II. DEVELOPMENT of ELEMENTARY INSTRUMENTAL PROGRAM

What with all these problems, it is imperative for the success of a string class that the enlistment program be successful. Students will choose to play if they have had a good general music background, if the string group is successful, if the administration supports the program, and if they like the director.23

Enlistment

House feels that "every child should have advance knowledge about when and how he may volunteer for beginning instruction. For best results, this campaign should be thorough and sustained, but noncoercive."24 There are several techniques that he mentions, and the director should employ three or four of them in enlisting members.

One technique is to have an announcement of the formation of beginning groups by the director following the performance of instrumental groups at a school assembly. This can include an introduction and a demonstration of various instruments and, perhaps, solos.25

23House, 63.  
24Ibid., 63-64.  
25Ibid., 64.
Another possibility is to have the director visit classrooms of potential string members and take along some of his advanced players to demonstrate various instruments. He can then send home a letter to parents explaining the program along with a form for them to fill out and return. (See APPENDIX) 26

A variation of the above theme is for the classroom teacher to make the announcement and to distribute the letters and forms to the children. Or before the director or teacher passes out the letters and forms, the announcement might be given over the office intercom. 27

Some other suggestions for enlistment include the use of bulletin boards and/or posters; talks by the director to the P.T.A., band parents' club, civic clubs, etc.; instrumental displays in the schools arranged in cooperation with local music stores; announcements in school and local newspapers, on radio and TV; and the inclusion in a letter to parents of the results of preliminary music tests. 28

Screening

One of the problems mentioned earlier was that of screening potential instrumental students. There are several methods by which this process can be done. One method is to administer a music aptitude test. The test must be one that

26 Ibid. 27 Ibid., 65. 28 Ibid.
is reliable, easy-to-interpret, and valid. Once the test is administered, the results should be interpreted to the parents.

Since aptitude tests don't separate the good and bad risks, perhaps a better indicator of future achievement is a student's intelligence quotient. A student should first of all be capable of learning, and good grades show both the intelligence and perseverance of the child. Without an average IQ or any indication of musical ability, a child should try to find another interest area. Carroll Copeland reports in the article "Beginners for Instrumental Music" that studies show a correlation between music grades and grades in other classes, especially math and reading.²⁹

A third influencing factor is the social background of the child. The type of home environment indicates to some extent the interest and future success of the child.

And finally, a fourth indicator is the personal interview. Through this medium the teacher can learn reasons for the child's past successes and failures and of the child's will to succeed. With this information the teacher can decide if the child has a chance to succeed with an instrument.

The recommended ages for beginning players are generally the same in most references. It is better for the child to have background in general vocal music before attempting an

instrument. Students in the fourth or fifth grade and older usually meet this qualification. However Hubbard believes a child can choose his instrument at the end of the second grade, and the Japanese teacher Suzuki has demonstrated successfully that very young children can play the violin.

When deciding the qualifications for students, it is necessary to consider the physical characteristics which string players in particular should have. Robert House has listed the following qualifications for string players: (a) a good sense of pitch, (b) an agile, flexible hand large enough to reach all needed intervals on all four strings, (c) a long enough right arm enabling the student to draw at least seven-eighths of the bow's length, and (d) the size of the instrument to fit the child.30 Children may begin on half or three-quarter size instruments and switch to full size ones as they mature. Those who are awkward on violin because of its small size may switch to viola, cello, or bass.

Finally, in deciding who should play an instrument, it is advisable to consider the number of players with which it is convenient to work. If the director remembers that he exists for the orchestra and not the reverse, then he will not be overly concerned about the numbers. However, he may still work to promote enthusiasm for certain instruments which are in limited numbers in his orchestra. Perhaps a band student

30 House, 66.
might double on a string instrument. With too many players on one type of instrument, the director might get permission from the administration to enlarge his classes. In this case the competition is keener, and weak students will drop out more quickly.31

Once students have been screened, the next step is to decide when to begin the program. If a fourth grade child or older has been approved as being physically and mentally capable and has had a good general music background, he has passed screening requirements. Now he must demonstrate his willingness and ability to care for an instrument, practice it, and bring it to school.

Besides the students being ready, the director and school must be ready also. The director should have adequate training, and he "... must not have his eye entirely on developing the players needed for his performing groups, but rather upon the means of creating the greatest number of successful players."32 The school can cooperate by allowing the classes to be held during the school day. There should be no cost for these lessons except for rental of school-owned instruments. And finally, as was mentioned before, the school should furnish a place for classes and funds for necessary materials.

31 Ibid., 65-66. 32 Ibid., 61.
Instruments

Now that the students have been screened and the school has furnished the director with a place for classes and with the minimum materials, the director can begin doling out instruments. As he does so, he must take at least three factors into consideration: the choice of the child, the physical features of the child, and the means of purchasing the instrument.

The choice of the child should be the initial factor in deciding which instrument to play. Without the desire to play an instrument from the beginning, motivation and interest will be difficult to maintain. Often the child's choice can be guided, and he will choose, for example, an instrument that his parents favor. Mitchell recommends letting the child choose his instrument and allowing him to switch instruments if he so desires.33 If the child wants to play an instrument but has no particular choice, Morgan recommends the piano because it gives immediate satisfaction. He also says that more string players are needed, but that violins may be tedious until the child masters intonation problems. And there is no reason to exclude any instrument from the choice of girls as is sometimes done.34

If the child's choice of instrument fits his build,


34Morgan, 135.
this next step is unnecessary. However there may be a desire to play an instrument for which the child is entirely unsuited physically. There are certain features which are suggested as being beneficial in playing string instruments.

House lists general qualifications for playing all instruments: "... larger instruments for larger students, ... agile instruments for students of agile minds and hands, [and] ... difficult instruments for students of patience and extra talent." 35

There are more specific recommendations for string players. For one thing, a child should have long, slender fingers for reaching intervals precisely. Because of a child's small hand, violins and cellos are preferred as beginning instruments, switching some students to violas and basses as the children grow. Cellists need strong fingers and a strong bow arm, and basses require rather robust players. All strings require players having exceptionally good ears.

And once a general fit of child and instrument has been made, a more specific fit can be made with half and three-quarter sizes. The following list is one which can be followed generally in choosing instrument size. 36

Violins for elementary schools may be purchased in one-eighth, one-fourth, one-half, three-fourths, and full-size instruments are recommended. Violas are generally classified

35 House, 67.

36 An additional guide fitting instrument size to the child's age level may be found in House's book Instrumental Music for Today's Schools, p. 88.
by lengths in inches: 15\(\frac{1}{2}\), 16, and 16\(\frac{3}{4}\). Cellos come in one-fourth, one-half, three-fourths, and full sizes. One-fourth and one-half sizes are popular in the fourth and fifth grades. Three-fourths is the size recommended for general school use and full-size, if possible. For schools string basses may come in one-fourth, one-half, three-fourths, seven-eighths, and a few full sizes. Though one-fourth and one-half sizes are often used in elementary grades, they have a quality too much like a cello's; therefore the three-fourths size is preferred.\(^{37}\)

The above is a general rule, but there are also characteristics which more specifically aid in fitting students to instruments.

With violins and violas larger sizes are appropriate if the child can hold them in playing position so that the middle finger can reach around the scroll and into the peg box. A cellist should be able to reach a major third in first position and should be able to draw the bow full length in a straight line. The cello should have a six to eight inch end pin. It should rest at mid chest when in playing position. Holding the bass perpendicular to the floor (not using the end pin), the child should be standing straight with his eyes on the same level as the top of the fingerboard.\(^{38}\)

Once the instrument is chosen and fits comfortably with the child's physique, it is then important that there are enough instruments to go around. Is it the responsibility

\(^{37}\) Dykema and Cundiff, 575. \(^{38}\) House, 88.
of the school or of the child's family to furnish the instrument? And what are the steps to consider in purchasing an instrument?

It is generally agreed that the school should purchase most of the instruments, which will subsequently be rented to the students. If it is possible, after students exhibit a real interest, they should purchase their own instruments. Occasionally within a community there will be people who will donate instruments. And, if necessary, there can be a fund drive to raise the needed money.

When the parents or the school purchases the instruments, they should do so, according to Dykema and Cundiff, directly from the dealer or by correspondence with him. The parents would do well to go through the school, as the director should know the reputable dealers who maintain established businesses. Schools which place definite orders payable at a specified time usually obtain the best terms. The dealers may sell for cash, installment, or for rental applied to purchase. Before the final transaction Dykema and Cundiff recommend acquiring a written guarantee plus references that "... might be necessary if the purchase were later to be examined by some other person."39 And however the money is raised, it should go through the usual school financial officer. To allow for complete freedom to use as the director sees fit, gift instruments must have accompanying formal transfers of ownership.

39Dykema and Cundiff, 573-74.
Whether purchasing new or second-hand instruments or receiving gift instruments, the factor to consider along with cost is the condition of the instrument. The director should be relatively familiar with instrument brand names and price lists. A fairly reliable guide to quality of a new instrument is its cost. Dykema and Cundiff have set up the following quality criteria for purchasing instruments:

A. Best quality--for established or professional musicians
B. Good quality--for promising beginners
C. Fair quality--for exploratory instrument--replace with better grade for serious students
D. Uncertain quality--for temporary use only

Dykema and Cundiff recommend new instruments rather than old unless the old ones are guaranteed to be sound by a repairman. Strings, especially, may need only a few repairs to keep them fit for further use. They do recommend, however, rebuilt instruments, which "... are lower in price and frequently are superior to new instruments at the same or even higher price."

One important thing to consider in buying a string instrument is the body of the instrument: does it have any cracks or openings or a loose lining? Do the pegs fit, and are the string holes in the pegs well spaced? Is the fingerboard smooth and not warped or ruttet? Is the head nut neither too high nor too low? Does the bridge need trimming, and does the sound post fit? The condition of the bow is important, too.

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40Ibid., 574. 41Ibid.
Does the frog mechanism work smoothly, not being worn or broken? Is the bow well-balanced and not warped, and does it need rehauling?

Once an instrument is acquired, it can be kept in good condition with proper care. However, from time to time the need for minor repairs will arise, which the director should be able to care for. He should "... be able to replace strings, to repair open edges, to reset a sound post properly, and to cut down a high bridge to the correct height." Other more serious repairs which are not the responsibility of the manufacturer or dealer, should be taken care of by itinerant repairmen connected with large firms.

The care a student gives his instrument should include handling it carefully and keeping it from rapid temperature changes. The bow must be loosened when not being used to maintain its shape and elasticity. Rosin should be cleaned off the instrument, and the instrument should be stored in a sturdy case. If possible there should be a waterproof case cover for inclement weather.

House has considered the need for school-owned instruments and believes the following list to cover the general need:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>harp</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violin</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viola</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cello</td>
<td>4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because violins are such popular instruments, the students may purchase their own, and the school may not have to purchase any.  

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\[42\] House, \$5-90.  
\[43\] Ibid., 6c.
House goes a bit further and says that the school may not have to purchase so many instruments if students double on an instrument. This is practical only if there are practice rooms and lockers in which instruments and music may be stored. Such an arrangement should be restricted to only one year in order that new classes might use these instruments. In considering the equipment that should accompany the instrument, the following is a list of recommended items. Violins will be considered first. The strings of a violin should be a steel E with a screw tuning-device on the tailpiece, gut A, aluminum-wound gut D, and silver-wound gut G. Metal bows are acceptable for beginners because they won't warp and are in a medium price range, but wooden bows are better for advanced players. General equipment needed with a viola include a bow, a chin rest, and a wooden case. Violas and cellos should have gut A and D and silver or copper G and C strings. Equipment needed with a cello includes a bow, a strong cloth bag, rosin, mutes, and a metal end pin. In an area of great climatic change, where cellos often crack or break open, plywood cellos may be satisfactory instruments. Basses often crack open, too, because of rough treatment and weather changes. For these reasons the newer plywood types are somewhat sturdier. Bass strings should be gut G and D and copper A and E.

Some people prefer different types of strings than

44Ibid., 70. 45Dykema and Cundiff, 575.
those mentioned above; however all-metal strings should be used sparingly as they produce a harsh tone. The most important thing is that the strings be of good quality and are in good condition.\textsuperscript{46}

The school should provide not only some of the instruments but should also provide other materials. Space for rehearsal is one of the most important. Storage space for instruments and uniforms, if available, is another necessity. The school should also furnish some stands, tuning bars, and additional strings, bridges, and such parts as are necessary for the common minor repairs.

Finally the school should provide funds for an adequate supply of music for all levels. There should be some for the most likely ensemble and group arrangements common to an elementary string and orchestral pattern. And this material file should be constantly expanding.

\textsuperscript{46} Charles Boardman Righter, \textit{Success in Teaching School Orchestras and Bands} (Minneapolis: Paul A. Schmitt Music Company, 1945), p. 93.
III. SCHEDULING and TEACHING of CLASSES

Lesson Types

Even before a group of children has shown interest in playing instruments, it is necessary to decide what type of a program will fit best into the school situation. There are three basic types of programs which can be adapted to a school: private tutoring, homogeneous classes, or heterogeneous classes.

The private tutorial method is one that is limitedly recommended. And even when it is practical to use this technique, it should be used with discretion. Private instruction is not advised for beginners, because it requires much motivation, practice drill, and high cost. For second or third year students there is some merit as well as for those who are beginning a second instrument. Advanced students can profit from private instruction in refining techniques and preparing for solo work, but even then authors hold that private lessons should be only for supplementary work.

If private lessons are given by a licensed teacher, Alfred W. Bleckschmidt believes they might be given during school hours. He states, however, that if the teacher has no license that it is often illegal to teach during school time. If the lessons may be given during school hours, the principal
and classroom teacher must be consulted. And if the tutor is not a member of the school staff, he may charge a fee for his lessons. 47

Salomé Berger, however, feels that the disadvantages of private lessons far outweigh the advantages. She feels that concentrated attention on a child tends to overemphasize the child's abilities and may make the child more egocentric than is normal. The child may realize his actual ability only after a public failure. Berger definitely states that "... in the majority of cases the tutorial method has been found lacking." 48

The group method of teaching is more widely recommended. Many authorities recommend beginning in an ensemble situation with strings separate from band instruments. Some of the values that they attach to group work are social, technical, and economic builders.

Children learn in the social situation of a group because they enjoy sharing similar experiences. "They like learning from one another, correcting one another, helping one another. They feel less shy and inhibited towards the teacher when they confront him in a body." 49 And within this


49 Ibid., 41.
enjoyment of group there is also chance for recognition through personal expression.

Children profit technically in group learning, too. Most problems of one beginner are common to some or all beginners, and a child is not so easily discouraged when he finds others with the same problems he has. The child is also motivated to excel because better players will set standards he wants to follow. And as the pupil struggles to keep up, he inadvertently becomes a better sight reader. This interaction within the group will lead the better players to help weaker ones, improving their own teaching skills. Because a child hears a work performed in a number of ways in a group, he will learn to evaluate these ways and will not rely on a teacher too much for criticism. These students develop a self-confidence in their playing. And as Berger adds, "Pupils who are trained to listen critically will in addition make intelligent concert listeners."50

There are other advantages to group playing, too. It is economical both in the time it saves the director and in the cost of private lessons the parents save. Even with the purchase of an instrument, school fees are much lower. Group work also conditions a child to playing in a group, which tends to be critical of over-all performance. This helps him not to have stage fright before other groups. A child who might

50Ibid.
become a professional musician has the opportunity to work with a group accompaniment. And since all children who want to should have the opportunity to play an instrument, group teaching more democratically enables them to do so.

The organization of a group may follow one of three patterns: identical instruments, related instruments, or any combination. This usually depends on the size of the school's music program. And the classes may be arranged in ability groups within this framework.

The homogeneous instrumental grouping is similar to expanded private lessons, but the advantage is in reduced time. The class can use one method book and have the chance to explore ensemble works. The problems of the group arise from the difficulty of scheduling—that is, drawing only a few children out of class at a time.51

Family groups of instruments are best suited to medium sized schools. This method works because problems within the group are closely related, and the student can understand his problems better by comparing them with those of other family instruments. More material is available which is often more interesting than that for one type of instrument, because the instruments assume their characteristic roles in family groups. Switching or doubling may be easier, and scheduling in blocks is facilitated. The director's main problem is to know all

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51 House, 71.
the instruments and not to neglect the problems of any.52

Heterogeneous classes, if varied enough in composition, produce a small orchestra. In this case, scheduling may be arranged to alternate with such classes as physical education or art, or it may meet during recess, study hall, or after school. Progress with such a variety of instruments will be slower, but good habits of instrument care and technique may be taught to all.53 Some authors recommend at least a year's work with the homogeneous or with the family group before beginning in an orchestral situation.

Class Schedule

A problem that occurs almost simultaneously with that of class type is the scheduling of instrumental classes. There are several variables which may affect a schedule. Dorothy Bondurant in her article "Scheduling Instruments Classes" mentions the following seven:

1. background, experience, and preference of the director,
2. the number of days per week that a director can be at school,
3. the time he would lose going between schools,
4. location and size of the rehearsal room,
5. the effect a schedule would have on each class involved,
6. the number of students,
7. the time available.54

Miss Bondurant also describes in this article the

52 Ibid., 72-73. 53 Ibid., 73.
three common types of scheduling patterns that directors utilize: the set schedule, rotating schedule, and departmental schedule.

With a set schedule a definite time is assigned for each class during the year. The student is released at a time which is convenient to the classroom teacher.

The rotating schedule involves advancing the student one half hour each lesson so he does not miss the same class two times in succession.

The third system is the departmental schedule, in which the school is set up in periods for each class. This includes periods for music and/or art. In this situation the child would miss no classes. A possible difficulty with this system is that a whole class may not elect to take instrumental lessons, leaving any number of children in the class while the rest were in their instrumental classes.

If none of these systems is completely satisfactory, lessons may be given partially or completely outside of school time. Dykema and Cundiff recommend this sort of arrangement if the rotating schedule is not practical to a school.

The recommended number of times the class meets per week and the amount of time per lesson varies from author to author. All recommend holding class at least once a week, preferably more. Dykema and Cundiff suggest two group rehear-

55 Ibid., 63-64. 56 Dykema and Cundiff, 284.
sals per week of forty to sixty minutes each, half in and half out of school time, plus two more rehearsals of small groups in which more individualized attention can be given.\textsuperscript{57}

In any case, the principal should be consulted in all scheduling of classes.

\textbf{Class Routine or Method}

The final item to be considered in this paper is the material presented in the class and the manner in which it is presented. Specific techniques for the teaching of each instrument are left to more technical and professional works, such as teaching manuals accompanying the child's instrumental instruction books.\textsuperscript{58}

The manner in which the class is conducted will be discussed first. Many of the references which serve as bases for this paper feel that a set routine is the most efficient means of organizing a class so that the director may be concerned only with the actual matter of teaching. One means suggested to accomplish this is to organize the group as a club. The officers would then relieve the director of several details of the class.\textsuperscript{59} Another is the class routine suggested by Hubbard. First a child is assigned a chair to be his for each lesson. At the beginning of each class period he takes his seat with his instrument, attends to initial duties of

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{58}A good list of these materials is found in Robert House's book \textit{Instrumental Music for Today's Schools}, pp. 98-99.

\textsuperscript{59}Dykema and Gundiff, 234.
adjusting the shoulder pad, rosinning the bow, etc., and waits for the teacher to tune his instrument if he is not able yet to do it. At the end of the class he must carefully put his instrument away and leave the music room in good order.60

Once the child is accustomed to a routine, the director can concern himself more with teaching. He will follow a general pattern in teaching beginning strings. His first lessons teach the child about his instrument: the names of the parts, how to hold it, and how to produce a tone. The director, as was stated before, will tune the instruments at first and will teach the child to tune his instrument as soon as he adequately can. Next the director will teach simple melodies which the child can learn by rote. As the director gives instructions, he will be careful to use the simplest language possible, at least fitting his vocabulary to the past musical experience of the child. He should adapt a half-individual, half-group method of teaching by giving a general instruction to the class, then moving from child to child as they play till all have mastered it. The piano should be used limitedly, and the director should let the children play through the music rather than always playing for them. The director should close the class with a familiar song.

Hubbard suggests a more rigorous routine, which would be suitable for an advanced elementary class. The initial action of a class period is, of course, tuning. Many of the children should be able, by the beginning of the second year, to tune their own instruments. Next there should be a review of the work presented in previous lessons. This would include technical problems, problems with the music, and problems of notation and rhythm. Then the director would lead the class in playing something of their own choosing. After this he would introduce some new work, presenting the new technical problems, new rhythmic, notational, or musical problems, and new problems of interpretation. Finally the director would hold a recital period. 61

There are other methods of teaching advocated by some. One of these is the method of teaching piano by films that is used in Paris. With this method students watch films of well-known pianists playing correctly. Students are able to see the correct method immediately without having to discover it for themselves. 62 This could be adapted, perhaps, for other instruments.

Another method is that mentioned earlier which is em-

61Ibid., 185-86.

ployed by Professor Shinichi Suzuki in teaching young children to play the violin. The professor teaches the mothers of these children to play the violin. The mothers then play simple Bach gavottes and other classics before their children till each child wants to learn to play. The motivation has apparently been very successful. The children learn to play by listening to records and by constant repetition. The children seem to gain sensitivity as well as technical ability. About five per cent of them decide to become professional.63

Such methods as these have been tried in limited areas, and opinion of their worth, perhaps, should be reserved till more work with them has been successfully attempted. Till then the traditional approach will probably be the most rewarding.

A fine example of what an instrumental program can offer to all ages of school children is exhibited at the Burris Laboratory School, which is associated with Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. Elementary children are introduced to fine music from the beginning with the emphasis on their enjoying playing their instruments. Their director, Dr. John Cooley, recently conducted a string concert which demonstrated the full range of participating students; elementary through high school. The elementary and junior sections of this April 30, 1965, concert shows the progression of the string program from fourth

Fourth Grade Strings

"Holy, Holy, Holy" Traditional
Gigue from "Sonata in F" Handel
(4th grade violin solo)
Elementary String Orchestra (4-5)
"Ting-A-Ling" Isaac
"Black Hawk Waltz" Traditional
(5th grade viola solo)
"Duet in G Major" Hohmann
(5th grade cello duet)
Junior String Orchestra
"Allegro Spiritoso" Senaille
(6th grade violin solo)
"Bourree" Squires
(7th grade cello solo)
"Hummers" Isaac
(8th grade string bass solo)
Allegro from "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" Mozart
(Junior string orchestra, 6-7-8)64

This paper has attempted to show the values of an instrumental program, particularly of a string program to a child, the need for it in the schools, how such a program could be organized, and what its emphasis should be. It is written from a layman's viewpoint and is directed to those who are interested in what has been done and what might be done in this area.

64 "The Burris Strings," dir. Dr. John Cooley (Burris Laboratory School, Muncie, Indiana: Ball State University, April 30, 1965), p. 2.
APPENDIX

The following letter appears in Robert House's book Instrumental Music for Today's Schools, p. 64. It offers a very thorough and inviting description of a very effective elementary instrumental program. The form, which is to be returned by parents, is also from this book, pp. 64-65.

April 15

Dear Parent:

Many of your child's classmates will be electing beginning instrumental instruction this fall or summer. We hope your child will also participate. Groups will be formed that will meet Monday through Friday this June 2-July 11. Other classes, meeting twice a week during school hours, will start in September. There is no charge for this instruction.

As soon as each pupil is ready [B16] he will be admitted to one of the performing organizations, provided there is an opening.

It is difficult to tell whether a child is musically talented. A general estimate is provided by the test we give all volunteers, but a more reliable guide is the child's general success in school. However, his actual desire to learn to play is the most important factor.

It is even more difficult to determine the instrument which will be most suitable for your child. Unless a particular instrument is desired, we would like to advise you on the choice, using general physique and future openings in our groups as a basis. In some instances it becomes apparent after a time that a change to another instrument is advisable.

For this reason it is not wise for you to purchase an instrument too soon. The school owns several which may be
rented for one year at a moderate charge. The local music store will also arrange to rent you an instrument [sic] and any payments may be applied to a later purchase.

We believe that learning to play a musical instrument can be one of the most cherished experiences in your child's life. The knowledge and skill he acquires will be useful to him whether it becomes a vocation, an avocation, or a memory. Will you consider the matter carefully and return the following questionnaire?

Sincerely,

* * * * *

(Please mail or bring to the school music office by May 1st.)

Our child would like to participate in the groups starting ______ this summer ______ next fall

Instrument choice, ______ We would like to discuss the possibilities with you. Our child has a strong desire to learn the ______ In procuring the instrument, we prefer ______ to rent a school instrument, if available ______ to arrange for an instrument independently

______________________________  __________________________
child's name            age

______________________________  __________________________
parents' signature         phone
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