



A VISION

All students at MELS participate fully in an authentic music ensemble experience. They are challenged with the long-term (perhaps even life-long) project of learning a complex instrument, and studying a broad range of musical forms. As students grow older, they will have the opportunity to develop the musicianship required to participate in college music ensembles, as well as the musicality required to create their own garage band and record songs.

At the core of the MELS music program is an emphasis in developing creativity, critical thinking, and community leadership. Students do not simply learn the rich music of the present and past, but also create their own music and take responsibility as *creators of culture*. At the same time, they are critically analyzing the music and media around them, exploring the role that the arts play in society. Finally, students are always making music *with others*. They are expected to take ownership of a variety of musical groups, and leadership in the communities they serve with their talents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Will students be able to learn other instruments?

A. Required music courses center around the string instruments, which are chosen for their nuance, diverse repertoire, capacity for group playing, and the straightforwardness of their mechanics. Additional musical opportunities will open up as the school grows, and in a few months we will start a jazz club after school.

Q. Should I buy my child an instrument?

A. Because of the cost of purchasing an instrument, **I do not recommend** investing in an instrument in the first year. Nonetheless, for those who are looking to purchase a beginner-level instrument, I suggest the Carlo Robelli instruments at Sam Ash Music (212-719-2299), the Artisan instruments at Catalano Music (516-488-2522), or the Klaus Mueller instruments at Southwest Strings online (www.swstrings.com). Note that both Sam Ash and Catalano offer buy-back and repair services. Approximate prices:

	Sam Ash (C. Robelli)	Catalano (Artisan)	Southwest (K. Mueller)
Violin Kit	\$170-220	\$400-450	\$134-200
Viola Kit	\$219-300	\$500-550	\$140-200
Cello Kit	\$500-600	\$900-950	\$574-800
Bass Kit	\$700+	Not Recommended	\$1100+

I do not recommend any instruments cheaper than these prices, as most are not set up properly and will cause students more frustration than motivation!

Q. Are students permitted to take the school instruments home?

A. Because school instruments are shared by multiple students, there will be limited opportunities in the future for students to take instruments home. However, students are permitted to stay after school and practice on Tuesdays and Fridays, provided they notify me in advance and have parent/guardian approval.

Q. How can I help ensure my child's success in music class?

A. Even though students may not take their instruments home, I strongly encourage students to practice their songs by moving their fingers/hands along an imaginary instrument and actively "hearing" (or singing!) the music in their heads. This takes a surprising amount of focus and builds muscle memory, and is advocated by a number of leading music pedagogues, including Don Greene at The Juilliard School in NYC.

In addition to checking if your son or daughter can perform a song for you in this manner, know that students also regularly have written homework in music class. This often takes the form of short writing or research assignments so look at for those and check on the website!

INSTRUMENT DAMAGE POLICY

Musical instruments are considered school property, much like any equipment belonging to MELS. Students have been trained thoroughly on the proper care and use of school instruments, and it is the school's expectation that these instruments last for generations to come. Students will be fined for any instruments damaged due to misuse or carelessness, and consequences related to the defacing of school property will be assigned where applicable.

CONCERT DATES

Students will be ready to perform their first concert towards the end of this Expedition in mid-December! Dates will be posted on my website and sent home with students shortly.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: <http://shieh.metropolitannels.com/>
Includes up-to-date homework, announcements, a musician-of-the-week, and media related to current case studies.

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