



BUILDING A HEALTHY
School Orchestra Program

**RECRUITING, RETENTION, AND
CREATING A CULTURE OF SUCCESS**

MARGARET SELBY
CLINICIAN

margaret_selby@charleston.k12.sc.us



GIA PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Building a Healthy School Orchestra Program: Recruiting, Retention, and Creating A Culture of Success

Margaret Selby

margaret_selby@charleston.k12.sc.us

Recruiting

Why orchestra?

What is needed to build a successful program?

Getting the Word Out:

- Communicate through multiple outlets
 - Email, mail, letters, signs, demos, whatever it takes!
- Create a flyer/brochure
 - Include FAQ's and a sign-up form.
- Create presentations
 - Talk to the prospective students in large and/or small groups.

Types of Presentations:

- Classroom Visits
- Grade level assembly-style presentations
- School tours, concerts, and orientation events for prospective students

Presentation Tips:

- Create a “show” that is entertaining and interactive.
- Tell students about the FUN they will have. Concerts, trips, and more!
- Know the answers to FAQs. Scheduling, instrument rental, etc.
- Bring flyers (and candy, stickers, T-shirts, or prizes!)
- Give cooperating teachers a hardcopy and an e-copy of your flyer to send home in the weekly “folders” or post online.
- Get the names and contact information for potential students. Follow up with a letter or email.
- Do something that creates a bond or inside joke between you and the kids.

Recruitment Concerts/Performances:

- Use a large group or combined groups.
- Play something upbeat and popular. Whatever you play, it must be IN TUNE and exciting.
- Look and sound awesome! Wear your orchestra T-shirts and jeans.
- Look like you are having fun. Smile, yell, laugh! Rehearse this. Students are too serious!
- Add a drum set or electric instruments.
- Have your students talk about what they love about being in the orchestra.
- Have your students go into the audience for a 2-minute instrument petting zoo.

Other General Recruiting Tips:

- Create a website or online platform.
- Post on school and/or parent social media or newsletters. (Have parents post for you!)
- Make it EASY to sign up (no deadlines, if possible).
- Create an online sign-up method.
- Create a list of students who have signed up and give it to guidance department or admin. This can help make their job easier when creating next year's schedule, and it can be used as evidence when asking to expand the number of classes that are offered at your school.

What if I can't recruit in person?

- Make a short, high-energy video.
- Yard signs make your program more visible to the community. Put them in the car and drop-off area at the schools, if possible.
- Email flyers.
- School Websites and Social Media
- Volunteer to play for other classes and school events (5th grade graduation or just the car-rider pick-up/drop-off line!)
- Your students will recruit for you!
 - Practice Buddies
 - Donut visits: Have some Orchestra "Ambassadors" chat with potential students.

Recruiting Timeline:

Plan to have layers of contact!

Example of Year-Plan for Recruitment: *

- Nov./December: 1st visit (meet and play for 4th/5th graders)
- March: Candy grams with QR code to info on website
- April: Class visits/paper sign-up brochure sent home, 1st email to all 5th grade parents with links to video and online sign-up
- April: Concert for all 5th graders at the middle school (side-by-side with practice buddies)
- April/May: Posting on social media each week
- May: Students tour school (performance and electric instrument petting zoo)
- Mid-May: 2nd email to all 5th grade parents with links to video and online sign-up

*Adjust as needed to fit your situation!

Retention, Creating Culture, and Developing Relationships

Create an Atmosphere of Success:

- Students need to feel successful every step of the way.
- Set everything up for success; don't put students (or yourself) in situations that are not going to be successful.
- Be well-planned and organized. Students appreciate a smooth classroom environment. They want to feel welcome and safe.
- Orchestra is for everyone! Make sure your environment reflects this. Include music from many backgrounds and cultures.

Have fun!

- Students joined to have fun. They fall in love with the music along the way.
- Have fun during instruction. Play games and celebrate successes throughout the year:
 - Pencil Prizes
 - Prize Drawer
 - Cheer: O-R-C-H-E-S-T-R-A Rocks!
 - T-shirts on Fridays
 - Wall of Fame
 - Time Bank
 - Awards
 - Contests for fabulous prizes (Can Can speed, note-reading)
 - Hula-Hoop Challenge
 - Birthday Brigade
 - Create celebration days or create your own traditions (Pi Day, Stand Partner Appreciation Day, Crazy Sock Day, funeral for all the broken rosin/strings, etc.)

Developing Relationships:

Student Connections:

- Develop personal connections and relationships.
- Students join orchestra to have fun. They will stay because they like you, their orchestra friends, and the music.
- Make orchestra the place to be.
 - Morning practice club, bass posse, birthday brigade, donuts/ice cream/pizza parties
- Give everyone a job/role.
 - Tuner, timer, librarian, rock stop collector, instrument caregiver, music stand repairperson, secretary, mascot, etc.
- Be positive. Have high expectations, but be fair and consistent.

Parent Connections:

- Show them that you care about their children and that they are in good hands.
 - Open house, new parent meeting, be organized and confident
- Parents value having a connection with their child's teacher.
 - 600 classes together
- Strong relationships will improve support when problems happen.
- Your reputation precedes you (for good or bad)! Parents talk.
- Communicate clearly!
 - Phone calls (if it's more than a few sentences, don't email, pick up the phone)
 - "Orchestra Updates" emails (newsletter), website, Remind
 - Ask parents for help!
 - Parent Volunteer form
 - Concert or rehearsal help
 - Be organized and show gratitude if you want them to keep coming back.

Community Connections:

- Become a valued part of the community.
 - Be seen (learn from the marching band).
- Fundraisers
- Performances
 - Nursing homes
 - Luncheons
 - Graduations or other ceremonies
 - Sporting events

T-shirts and other PR gear:

- Design a shirt that an 8th grade boy would want to wear...in public...proudly.
- Buy extras for your principal, AP's, secretary, bookkeeper, custodians, cafeteria workers, other teachers. Anyone who supports your program!
- Give T-shirts to chaperones or volunteers
- Include cost for T-shirts in your class fee, if possible.
- Sell bumper stickers/magnets, hoodies, sweat pants...it's all good!



Margaret Selby is the orchestra director and 2020–21 Teacher of the Year at Laing Middle School in Charleston, SC, where she grew the program from 42 to over 200 students in 5 years. She was the 2022 Featured Clinician for the Orchestra Division of the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) and is a contributing author of *Rehearsing the Middle School Orchestra*, published by Meredith Music and distributed by GIA Publications. She has conducted the West Virginia Junior All-State Orchestra, multiple regional orchestras, and has adjudicated orchestras in Las Vegas and South Carolina. She has also presented sessions for the Texas Orchestra Directors Association (TODA), the South Carolina Music Educators Association (SCMEA), co-presented at the ASTA National

Conference (2012, 2020, 2021), and was a panelist at the 2019 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. She served as President for the SCMEA Orchestra Division and is currently the SCMEA Orchestra Division Region 4 Representative. Mrs. Selby is the 2017–18 String Educator of the Year awarded by Southern String Supply. She earned degrees in Music Education and Cello Performance from the University of South Carolina, studying under Dr. Robert Jesselson. She has performed with the South Carolina Philharmonic, the Charleston Symphony, and regularly as a freelance cellist. She is also a registered Suzuki cello teacher. She is currently co-writing the upcoming *Habits of a Successful Young String Musician*, a beginner method book (GIA). Mrs. Selby lives in Mt. Pleasant, SC, with her husband and their two crazy teenagers. She enjoys running and sampling Charleston's many amazing restaurants.

HABITS OF A SUCCESSFUL MIDDLE LEVEL STRING MUSICIAN

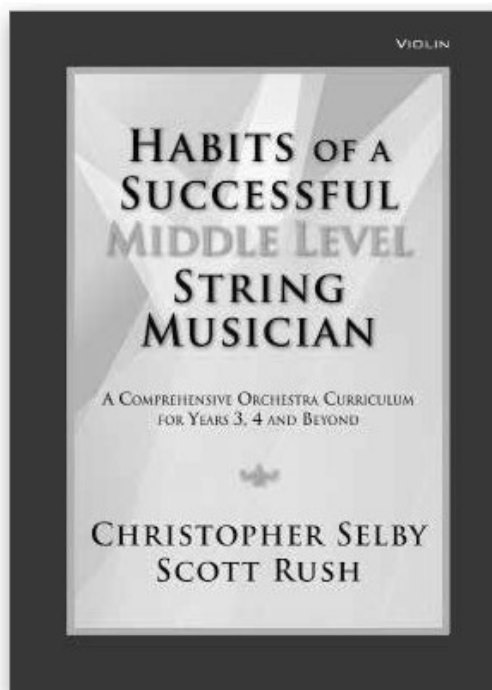
A Comprehensive Orchestra Curriculum for Years 3, 4 and Beyond

CHRISTOPHER SELBY, SCOTT RUSH

Habits of a Successful Middle Level String Musician is a field-tested musical collection of over 300 sequenced exercises for building fundamentals. Perfect to use with the entire string orchestra or a solo player, this series contains carefully sequenced finger pattern and shifting etudes, tone and articulation warm-ups, sight-reading exercises, rhythm vocabulary studies, chorales, and much more. In one place, this series collects everything an aspiring player needs to build fundamental musicianship skills and then be able to transfer those skills directly into the performance of great literature.

Habits of a Successful Middle Level String Musician is the answer to the very simple question, “What should I be learning during fundamentals time?”
Habits of a Successful Middle Level String Musician:

- Presents a differentiated, sequential, and comprehensive method for developing finger pattern and shifting skills to address the most common problems encountered by intermediate level orchestra students.
- Organizes tone, rhythm, and articulation patterns into a flexible and sequential series.
- Creates a method for teaching scales, arpeggios, and thirds that simultaneously accommodates students of different ability levels.
- Provides chorales for the development of intonation, tone quality, blend, and musicianship.
- Presents sequenced rhythm vocabulary charts in a format that allows transfer from timing to pitches in a musical context.
- Includes over ten pages of audition sight-reading exercises in a full-ensemble format that is well planned in scope and sequence.
- Promotes the idea that students should cross the threshold from the “technical components of playing” to music making.



AVAILABLE EDITIONS:

Digital versions of all student books now available for \$6.95 each!
Visit www.giamusic.com/habitsdigital

G-9601	VIOLIN	\$9.95
G-9602	VIOLA	\$9.95
G-9603	CELLO	\$9.95
G-9604	BASS	\$9.95
G-9605	STRINGS FULL SCORE AND CONDUCTOR'S EDITION	\$34.95



GIA Publications, Inc. 1.800.GIA.1358 or 708.496.3800 • www.giamusic.com

MUSIC THEORY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL STRING MUSICIAN TEACHER'S EDITION

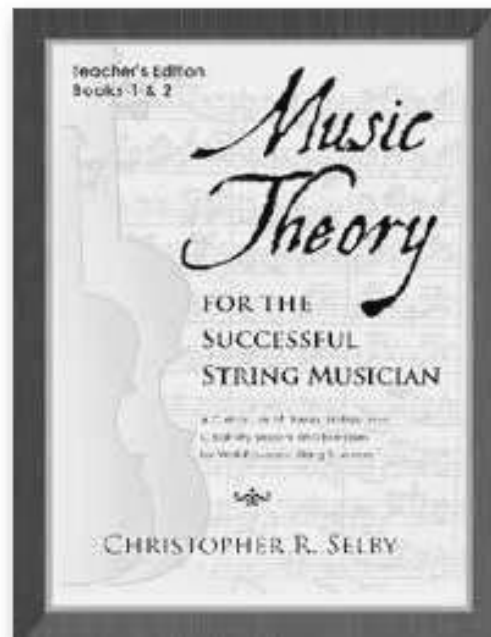
A Curriculum of Theory, History, and Creativity
Lessons and Exercises for Well-Rounded String Students

CHRISTOPHER R. SELBY

The perfect solution for distance learning! This teacher's edition has dozens of activities, reproducible worksheets and quizzes, pre-made lesson plans and sub plans, as well as access to free online videos.

Christopher Selby presents a comprehensive and pedagogically sound sequence specifically for orchestral string students and also addresses questions and offers guidance in resolving problems that are unique to the orchestra classroom. This curriculum will help directors teach music theory, music literacy, music history, and creativity—all of those hard-to-reach standards that ultimately help music students become more well-rounded and better performers, creators, and consumers of great music. Students will learn:

- **Tonal literacy.** Fingerboard maps and diagrams teach students how all sharp, flat, and natural notes on the staff relate to the spaces on the fingerboard. Sequential lessons introduce students to minor and major seconds and the effects that key signatures and accidentals have on finger patterns. Students also learn about thirds, tetrachords, and key signatures for all major and minor scales.



- **Rhythmic literacy.** The rhythm units teach students how to mark their music so they can perform rhythms independently, correctly, and confidently. Students will learn to read and decipher dotted, tied, and syncopated rhythms, as well as the longer notes and rests in orchestral music.
- **Historical awareness.** Students will learn the evolution of string instruments and how string music has evolved over the past four centuries. They will learn about composers and musical genres from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern eras.
- **Creative activities.** Creativity units teach students how to write down their ideas while also encouraging them to break free from written notation and focus on the enjoyment of making their own music with friends. These units give students opportunities to contribute their own ideas to the field of string music.

G-9945	TEACHER'S EDITION	SPIRAL-BOUND, 396 PAGES	\$55.00
G-9941	STUDENT BOOK 1 – VIOLIN	SADDLE-STITCH, 48 PAGES	7.95
G-9942	STUDENT BOOK 1 – VIOLA	SADDLE-STITCH, 48 PAGES	7.95
G-9943	STUDENT BOOK 1 – CELLO	SADDLE-STITCH, 48 PAGES	7.95
G-9944	STUDENT BOOK 1 – BASS	SADDLE-STITCH, 48 PAGES	7.95
G-10115	STUDENT BOOK 2 – VIOLIN	SADDLE-STITCH, 52 PAGES	8.50
G-10116	STUDENT BOOK 2 – VIOLA	SADDLE-STITCH, 52 PAGES	8.50
G-10117	STUDENT BOOK 2 – CELLO	SADDLE-STITCH, 52 PAGES	8.50
G-10118	STUDENT BOOK 2 – BASS	SADDLE-STITCH, 52 PAGES	8.50

