Parent and Student Handbook

Main ELM Number
Call or Text (415) 636-8742

“Show the children the beauty of music and the music will show them the beauty of life”

Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, Founder of El Sistema
Dear Parents:

Welcome to the academic year of Enriching Lives through Music (ELM). We are happy to have you and your child in our program. ELM provides multi-year intensive music education and performance experiences for children to develop passion, discipline and skills to pursue successful pathways in life. We commit to your child throughout their childhood – from elementary school through high school. They will become excellent musicians and young adults with good values, discipline and high aspirations, prepared to go to college and be successful in their lives.

We created this handbook for you to:
• Understand the program’s goals, structure and inspiration
• Recognize the parental and student commitment
• Understand the benefits of our intensive program
• Get to know our staff
• Answer questions about how we work

We hope that this is a valuable resource for you. If you need help understanding any of the information or have any questions, comments or concerns please let us know. We are always happy to talk to you and look forward to your feedback. Please feel free to come listen to your child during rehearsals and please introduce yourselves to our wonderful teachers and staff. We want to get to know you and we want for you to be part of our community. Children thrive when their parents are involved and show them how much they care. We offer you many opportunities to do this.

Sincerely,

Jane Kramer, Ph.D.
ELM Founder and Executive Director
Location
Unless otherwise notified, classes will always take place at the following locations:

Saturday and After School Program for Venetia Valley Wind Students
Venetia Valley Middle School
177 N San Pedro Road
San Rafael, CA 94903

After School Program for all Strings, and Middle School and High School Winds
2955 Kerner Boulevard
Suite B
San Rafael, CA 94901

Our Program
ELM is a full-scholarship, intensive multi-year music education and performance program dedicated to helping children develop the skills, passion and discipline to pursue successful pathways in life. We start our students in elementary school and keep them engaged through increasingly more advanced music and performance opportunities through high school and to college. We provide them with instruments, intensive after school music instruction, Saturday ensemble and performance classes and many opportunities to perform. We raise the money from grants and donations to provide a scholarship for each student for each year they are in the program. The instruments and the program are free to all participating students as long as they are in the program.

While your children learn to become good musicians, they are also learning discipline, focus and responsibility – skills that will help them to become lifelong learners and prepare for the 21st century world. Students in our program and other ones like ours do better in school and are more likely to finish high school and go to college.

ELM is inspired by El Sistema, a Venezuelan music education system started over 40 years ago that now has similar programs all over the world. Each year, El Sistema provides over 800,000 children with free musical instruments and music instruction so that they may play in youth orchestras throughout their country. There are many El Sistema programs here in the United States and we are able to play music with students from these other programs.

ELM Philosophy
We believe that every child, regardless of race, age or income level deserves access to exceptional programs. With a strong commitment to youth education, we constantly seek ways to enrich the lives of your children and others in the community so that they have an opportunity to excel. **What we do and believe**
- Foster the idea that an orchestra is a community where everyone supports each other
- Hold high expectations in musical and academic excellence for each child
- Develop the whole child, not only as a musician, but as a citizen and scholar
- Provide a flexible, fun and safe learning environment
- Recognize that every child is an asset and brings different and unique strengths
- Understand that education can provide empowerment and pride
- Believe that music and art can be powerful agents of social change
**Program Information**

**Schedule**
- ELM Saturday and afterschool programs run from **September through June**.
- Please refer to the ELM dates/calendar for more details.
- We have summer classes, and highly recommend that all students attend when you are in town so that you can keep up with your instrument progress.
- The summer schedule will be communicated to families in March.

**Depending on the program in which your child is participating, he or she is REQUIRED to come on the days/times listed on the ELM Schedule.** ELM’s success is based on the commitment of our students and their family support. ELM provides both a safe and meaningful opportunity for your child to be productive outside of school, and also to improve his or her academic and social skills by developing personal discipline, fostering a sense of responsibility, and instilling a sense of personal pride in his or her accomplishments. Students are required to practice music at home for 30 minutes on the days ELM is not in session. Please encourage your child to practice and provide a safe quiet space for them to do so. Ask your child to play for you and show interest in what your child is learning.

**Communication**
Parents and guardians will receive text messages from site coordinators and parent representatives for each group. Mailings, and notes will be sent home with students regarding important program updates on a consistent basis throughout the year. These notifications will include program calendars, information about special events (field trips and performances) and schedule changes. Please make sure to check your child’s ELM folder every week and return any signed confirmation by the expected deadline. Please be sure that our administrative staff always has current mailing address and phone numbers so that you can receive this information in a timely manner and know the best way to reach you.
OPPORTUNITIES
ELM offers many opportunities for both students and families.

For Students
Intensive music and ensemble classes
The heart of the ELM experience is providing high quality and intensive music classes. Most of our students study with us two to three days after school and also on Saturdays. Students have the opportunity to progress to increasingly higher levels of musicianship and performance opportunities as they progress.

Performance Opportunities
Several times throughout the year students will have the opportunity to perform for their families, peers and members of the local community. These performances will include orchestra concerts, recitals, and community events.

Free Instrument When You Are Enrolled in the Program
ELM provides instruments for their students free of charge for as long as your child is in the program. Before receiving an instrument, you and your child must read and sign an Instrument Care & Contract Agreement that gives instructions on how to care for your instrument. If your child accidentally damages or loses his/her instrument, please tell your child’s teacher immediately. You will take responsibility for loss of or damage to the instrument and will make up the monetary value of any damage or loss, up to a max of $450.

Field Trips
Students will have the opportunity to attend concerts, special events, and community performances throughout the year at various venues in the Bay Area. These field trips will expose students to a wide range of music and inspire them in their own music-making. ELM staff will inform you in advance of upcoming field trips and details regarding date, time and location. Many of these field trips are available for parents and families as well.

For Parents
ELM is a full scholarship program and we rely on our parent community to help run many parts of the program. We have found that when parents are involved in ELM, their children are happier and progress faster. Being part of ELM will give you many opportunities to meet other parents, support your children and learn about important resources.

Volunteer opportunities
We would like for all of our ELM parents to feel part of our community. There are many ways to be involved and it will be easy to find one to fit your schedule. Making phone calls, helping set up and clean up after rehearsals and concerts, supervise children during recess, holding garage sales and other fundraisers for our program. We would like for all parents to volunteer between 10-15 hours each year. Please sign up for the opportunity that meets your needs and schedule.
**Parent Leadership – being a parent representative**
Parents can sign up to be a parent representative for a group of students who play the same instrument as your child. Parent representatives are responsible for making phone calls, communicating important messages to your ‘group’, and welcoming new parents into the program. Please consider volunteering to be a parent rep or assistant parent rep. Parent representatives have meetings at ELM on Saturdays on the first Saturday of the month.

**Musicianship Classes**
Parents have opportunities throughout the year to participate in parent musicianship classes and special workshops and ukulele lessons. We will have more information for you later.

**Parent workshops**
Parent workshop topics will be decided based on parent feedback forms and interest. We will be having monthly parent workshops on topics such as mental health, legal concerns, and how to help your students succeed in school.

**OUR STAFF**
**Music Teachers**
Our music teachers are highly qualified performing musicians and educators who care about making a difference for children in our community.

**Administration**
The administration for ELM is here as a resource for you and your child. Please contact us with any questions, concerns, ideas and suggestions.

**Program Policies**
**Classroom Expectations:**
- Respect others by listening actively, talking and playing at the appropriate times
- Respect their instruments and classroom space
- Keep all electronic devices turned off and put away
- Take responsibility for learning
- Support their peers by acting as mentors
- Show up on time and prepared to learn (bring instrument and music)

**Enrollment and registration**
All students who want to participate in ELM must be enrolled by their parents or guardians. Enrollment applications and re-enrollment forms are accepted on a yearly basis. Student continuation is expected as part of their commitment to music. ELM is a multi-year program.
Sign-in & Sign-out Procedure
Upon arrival parents or students must sign in. We will only sign out a student to approved adults. If students are able to walk home on their own, we need written permission. All students must be picked up on time. If your child needs to leave early, please let us know that morning.

- Sign in will take place after school and Saturdays with the Program Leader
- Sign out will take place after school and Saturdays with the Program Leader

Attendance Policies
We expect our students and families to commit to coming to our program on all required days. Although we understand that there are family emergencies that come up, we are limiting the number of absences to two per semester. If your child exceeds 3 unexcused absences in a semester, his or her space in the program might be replaced by the first student on the waiting list. After 3 unexcused absences, we will schedule a staff and student/parent meeting to discuss the student’s future participation in ELM. In addition, student participation in concerts and special events will be at the discretion of program administrator Christina Lesicko and their teacher, and based on their attendance and ability to play their music.

Series of Absences
If your child needs to miss several classes in a row for a reason outside of ELM programming, please send a note to your teacher for approval from the program administrator.

Excused Absences
To receive an excused absence, you must call or text ELM at (415) 636-8742 prior to the absence. The decision whether an absence is excused rests with the site director. Student illness, family emergency, religious holidays, and school-related activities are examples of excused absences.

Absence Form
Before or after the absence, you must complete the absence form and turn it into program administrator Christina Lesicko. The decision of whether an absence is justified is at the discretion of the administrator Christina Lesicko. Student illness, family emergencies, religious holidays, and school-related activities are examples of excused absences.

Rehearsal and Concert Dates
Attending rehearsals on the day before the concert and on the day of the concert is mandatory. You should talk to program administrator Christina Lesicko if you have a conflict. It is at the approval of the administrator if your child can participate in the concert.
Tardy Policy
Please help your child be on time. They often feel uncomfortable walking into a class late and may miss important information. Being late is also unfair to the teachers and other students. If a student arrives late, he or she must report to ELM’s sign-in table. After 3 tardies, we will schedule a staff and student/parent meeting to discuss the student’s future participation in the program.

Late Pick-Up
Please pick up your child on time every day, out of respect for our faculty and program. After the third warning, your child might be dropped from our program.

Discipline Policy
Our teachers create positive learning environments to keep our students engaged and focused and expect that that there will be very little need to discipline students. If a child is disruptive in class we hope that calling attention to the behavior in an immediate and constructive way will help. After two warnings, the teacher and the student will meet to discuss the situation and ways to prevent it from occurring in the future. If the behavior persists, a meeting with the student and his or her parents will be scheduled. We will do everything that we can to keep your child motivated to participate fully in ELM. If we are not able to do so we may decide that ELM is not the right fit for your child.

Policy of Non-Discrimination
ELM does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national or ethnic origin or disability in any of our programs.

Playing a new instrument
We do not encourage students to switch instruments because we find that the students who switch are often the ones who drop out of the program.

Contact Us
We want to hear from you! If you need help understanding any of the information in this handbook, or have any questions, comments, suggestions or concerns that are not addressed, please feel free to let us know. We are always happy to communicate with parents and families. You are also free to talk with and set up a meeting with your child’s main music teacher. Please contact us at:

ELM MAIN NUMBER (415) 636-8742 (Parent Hotline)
ELM Office Monday-Thursday 415-870-9053
Venetia Valley Students Tuesday-Thursday contact
Karla Rico karla94806@gmail.com
Matt Boyles matt@elmprogram.org