

**American String Teacher Association**  
**Discovering Strings and Orchestra**  
**Volunteer Clinician/Youth Group Leader Planning Checklists**

Before Session #1 (Remember that during the project the volunteer string clinician is never to be left alone with the youth. The leader must always be present, and volunteer parents are welcome to assist. It is fine for volunteer string clinicians to work in pairs.)

- \_\_\_ Together exchange contact information and use calendars to plan out the sessions dates, times, locations (and alternates in case of bad weather or other conflicts). Try to identify string ensembles and string making/repair shops close enough to use for the field trips, or to invite to visit where the youth group meets. Decide if loaner string instruments in sizes which fit the youth are locally available for the petting zoo and plucking sessions. If not, contact ASTA at least several weeks before the first session.
  
- \_\_\_ Discuss what is the “joy of strings,” the purpose of this project. Decide how to explain this in words and actions to the students who will be involved.
  
- \_\_\_ Prepare a short note to send to parents and children informing them of the sessions days and times, and that those who attend all of them will be receiving certificates and patches. Also invite parent volunteers to assist, especially on the field trips. Give the name of the volunteer string clinician and a very short list of his or her background in strings.
  
- \_\_\_ Tell ASTA how many activity workbooks you need for session #1 and request they be sent with the DVD to the clinician’s address in plenty of time before the session date.
  
- \_\_\_ Send out media releases about the project and invite public

donations of time, cash, or loaning of instruments if they are needed.

\_\_\_ Contact an available school or out-of-school youth group to perform very briefly for the group during the first session.

### Session #1: Introduction to Strings

\_\_\_ After being introduced to the group, the volunteer string verbally should encourage children to explore strings for themselves. Mention all the types of music that strings can play: classical, fiddle, movie, world, and pop. If a string youth group is available to perform briefly, introduce them after adequate set-up time and areas needed are provided. If no group is available, the volunteer string clinician should perform a short example of string music (bring music stand and sheet music if needed; also endpin holder if using cello/bass; and chair for cello).

\_\_\_ Set up the DVD player equipment and arrange student seating nearby so all can see and hear.

\_\_\_ Inform the group leader of proper handling of the instruments in advance (also any parent volunteers). Set up the petting zoo, and have a big label for each type with its name written. Plan an orderly way for each child to have time to examine an instrument and ask questions or make comments.

\_\_\_ Pass out the activity booklets, inviting children to begin filling in their pages at home. Have markers so each child can write his or her name on the book.

\_\_\_ Have the youth group decide which core academic subject to select for session #2: math, science, history, world cultures.

\_\_\_ Allow time to put away materials and equipment (with help from children and parents). Both clinician and group leader should make written notes to keep evaluating the session.

### Session #2: Strings and Academics

\_\_\_ Download a sample lesson plan for the session from ASTA in the core subject. Decide how to adapt it for this group, or use one available on the Internet, or create an original plan (if you do so, please add it to the ASTA lesson plan online library).

\_\_\_ Obtain materials and equipment needed for the plan (make, borrow, or purchase them well in advance) and do a mock presentation of it to make sure the timings fit the size and ages of your participants . If children will be working in groups, decide how to assign members to groups in advance.

\_\_\_ Write written notes to evaluate the session.

### Session #3: Group Lesson

\_\_\_ Obtain loaner instruments (without bows) for children to pluck during this session, and a way to easily transport them.

\_\_\_ Decide if the tune for the session will be on a tape or CD, or played live by the volunteer string clinician (highly preferred). Decide if each child will pluck the accompaniment alone, or if you have enough loaner instruments to do this in one or more groups.

\_\_\_ The volunteer string clinician selects a simple tune such as

“Pop Goes the Weasel” in a key to which open strings on the available loaner instruments will harmonize. Write out the big names of strings to pluck for children to see on a blackboard or big poster.

- \_\_\_\_\_ If parent volunteers will be helping, show them in advance how to safely hold instruments and pluck the strings. For violins and violas have some type of shoulder pads ready; have chairs the correct height for cellists and endpin holders; for bass have a non-slip flooring or endpin holders.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create a simple explanation of how to hold the loaned instrument, how to locate and pluck the open strings to be used, and how to stay in tempo with the tune. Break the steps down into easily-understood bits of information, and do not rush them. This whole session is to allow children to feel what it is like to be successful string musicians. If there is extra time, have them play individual solos or join all together as a group. If parents are available with adult-size instruments, let them also experience the lesson as performers.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inform children and parents that the next session will either be a field trip to a string making/repair shop, or (if not possible) that a guest or video will be presented at the regular meeting place for the group. Schedule transportation for the children, leader and the volunteer string clinician.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send home a paper with basic behavior guidelines when in the shop, as well as courteous behavior during the transportation to and from it. Remind children that they are representing their organization to the community.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have children and adults help put away instruments and equipment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Return any loaned instruments.

\_\_\_\_\_ Write notes to evaluate the session.

#### Session #4: Field Trip

\_\_\_\_\_ Make contact with a local string making/repair shop to arrange a visit, date, time, where to park, what entrance to use, names of shop people for introductions, etc. Have an alternate day/time set in case of bad weather or other conflicts. Make sure the shop staff know that the purpose of the trip is to see how instruments are made, to try out different instruments (plucking only), to see various sizes of instruments available, and to learn how instruments work. NAMM members can use this session to promote strings and orchestras in their communities.

\_\_\_\_\_ Send out media releases about the field trip, inviting photography.

\_\_\_\_\_ Upon returning from the field trip inform children and parents that the next session will be either a field trip to a public concert or a private concert given at the next session. Send out a paper with basic guidelines about behavior at a public concert: no talking or noise-making during playing; appropriate applause; how to raise hands to ask questions if there is a question time; how to create questions about the main topic, strings, use of restrooms, buddy system, etc. If possible, already have complete details of the date, time, location, transportation, and costs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Write notes to evaluate the session

\_\_\_\_\_ Send a written thank you to the shop or persons who spent time with the group.

### Session #5: Field Trip or Private Concert

\_\_\_\_\_ Send out media releases about the field trip or private concert, inviting photography.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a written list of local resources for the children to keep learning after the project ends. The list does not have to be comprehensive, but may include private and public string teachers, youth ensembles and orchestras, music stores for instruments, sheet music, recorded music, media which broadcast string playing locally, libraries and music librarians (for books, magazines, recordings, sheet music). Also download the national resource list from Anne Clark, which will be posted on the [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com). Print out one per student to distribute.

\_\_\_\_\_ Make sure all parents/guardians know details of the field trip well in advance, and have transportation planned for the children, group leader, and clinician, as well as other adults or family members who will be attending.

\_\_\_\_\_ Have the tickets purchased or picked up in advance. Let each child have the experience of giving the ticket to an usher, and being given a printed program.

\_\_\_\_\_ Before transporting, make sure children have taken a bathroom break and have clean hands. If helpful, create a buddy system, and stress that no child is to leave the group during the visit, unless accompanied by a responsible adult (not the volunteer string clinician).

- \_\_\_ Plan when to conveniently leave the concert if it is longer than appropriate for the children. Explain to them how to exit properly during a break in the program.
  
- \_\_\_ If this session is to be the last one, decide when to present each participating child with the completion patch and certificate. Have these materials ordered and downloaded from ASTA. If a ceremony is to be used to present them, invite the media and parents/relatives to attend in the future.
  
- \_\_\_ Send a written thank you to the string ensemble and staff who presented the concert.
  
- \_\_\_ Write notes to evaluate the session.

#### Optional Session #6: Advocacy and Leadership

- \_\_\_ Download the ASTA Advocacy kit which offers step-by-step instructions for starting an orchestra program. This is for the use of the group leader and any interested parents.
  
- \_\_\_ Decide in advance if this session can be combined with a completion ceremony, and make any of those arrangements, including any media releases.
  
- \_\_\_ Decide which community leaders to select for the letters of advocacy: school administrators and board members, civic government leaders, parks/recreation department heads, local arts councils or association staff, and others. Parents may be able to assist with suggestions. Collect addresses.
  
- \_\_\_ Obtain envelopes, stamps, writing paper, and pencils or pens for children's use. Download the sample business letters from the ASTA website, and adapt them for the group's use.

\_\_\_\_\_ Decide if you want each child to write a letter, or use instead a group letter signed by all. Decide if you wish to use the children's own handwriting, or a printed version using their wording. Plan any extra equipment. Also decide if you want to send photographs or children's drawings in the letters.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail the letters. Give the volunteer string clinician, the group leader, and any parent volunteers a thank you token of some kind, and say goodbyes.

\_\_\_\_\_ Write notes to evaluate the session.

\_\_\_\_\_ The volunteer string clinician needs to file an evaluation of the entire project experience with ASTA, using suggestions posted at [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com). Also at this time the clinician should compute all the donated time, mileage, and expenses contributed to the project and submit this to the project website to obtain a statement of fair market value for income tax purposes and/or use in documenting professional development activities.