

EL SISTEMA AEOLIAN

A Program of The Aeolian Hall

Giving Music to Everyone

PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

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Welcome to El Sistema Aeolian!

Dear Parents & Guardians,

“The Gift of Music, the Gift of Community”

You and your child are going to have an exceptional experience by joining the El Sistema Aeolian program. Through the program, your child will have access to a wide range of opportunities to learn and explore music.

The El Sistema Aeolian program is an after-school music education program run by The Aeolian Hall. It is free and intensive, with a strong focus in social development.

In this program, the orchestra and the choir are at the centre of the activities. They are collective and caring communities where each child’s individuality is valued while promoting cooperation and interaction with others.

We have created this handbook as a resource to offer you information on the many aspects of the program, including your child’s and your responsibilities.

If you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed in this handbook, please, contact us at Aeolian Hall by email at elsistema@aeolianhall.ca.

We will be happy to provide you with further information and to hear your ideas and suggestions.

Cordially,

The El Sistema Aeolian and The Aeolian Hall Teams

“Music has to be recognized as an agent of social development. It transmits the highest values – solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion. It unites entire communities and expresses sublime feelings.”

Jose Antonio Abreu (Founder of El Sistema)

El Sistema Aeolian Program Overview

- Classes of music instruction and rehearsals will run for a minimum of 1 day/week (1 hour/day) for **Beginners**, and up to 3 days/week for **Advanced students** (2.5 hours/day) for 32 weeks during the school year, plus a Summer Camp (optional).
- Instruments provided at no cost to families - note there will be a **Damage Deposit of \$30/instrument** which will be refunded when the instrument is returned in good condition
- A welcoming and nurturing environment
- Field trips and opportunities to experience music outside the classroom
- Leadership development opportunities
- Strong community and volunteer support
- Access to a free piano through the **88 Keys program** (partnership with D&S pianos)
- Food program: As finances allow, the program may provide nutritious snacks and meals including opportunities to learn about food and experience food from different cultures

Concerts and Performance Opportunities

Please note that concerts and public performances will be scheduled outside of the regular program throughout the year. Students will have the opportunity to perform for families, peers and members of the local community. We encourage you to come to these performances and share the wonderful sense of pride, community and accomplishment that they foster in each child. There are some special projects that occur during the year which may include performances with famous Aeolian Guest Artists. Please try to participate fully in these events. We will alert you well in advance to their dates and times.

Parent and Family Volunteer Commitment

El Sistema Aeolian is built on the belief that music can transform lives and strengthen communities. While the program is free for all students, it is only possible through the shared effort of families, staff, and community members. To help sustain and grow the program, we ask each family to contribute 5–10 hours of volunteer time over the course of the year.

Volunteer opportunities are flexible and can be matched to your interests, skills and availability. Examples include:

- ☐ Student check-in and check out
- ☐ Assisting at concerts and student performances (ushering, set-up, take-down, monitoring)
- ☐ Helping with fundraising events or community outreach
- ☐ Supporting classroom needs (monitors for the classroom and hallways, preparing snacks)
- ☐ Administrative help such as copying, filing, or event promotion
- ☐ Facility support (light cleaning, maintenance, or special projects)

Your involvement not only helps the program run smoothly but also shows our students the value of community support and teamwork. Even a small contribution of time makes a big difference in keeping this program vibrant, accessible, and inspiring.

If you are unable to volunteer in person, please let us know—there are always other meaningful ways to contribute. Together, we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to experience the joy and discipline of making music.

Help Support Our Music Program

At the Aeolian, we believe music has the power to change lives—not only for the children who learn it, but also for the communities in which they live.

Your child is part of this circle of young musicians, learning not just music, but teamwork, empathy, and community spirit.

To help us keep this program strong and accessible, we invite parents to consider the option of a small donation of \$5 per child per week.

- The program runs 32 weeks (Sept–June)
- That's \$160 per child for the year—less than 8% of the actual cost!

Every amount helps! Donations of any size are welcome.

Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more.

For more detailed information, please email Darren Sigesmund at elsistema@theaeolian.ca

Thank you for helping us build a stronger, more compassionate community through music from all of us at The Aeolian and El Sistema Aeolian

Core Program Information

A. Beginners - 1 class/week

Time	Mondays	Wednesdays	Fridays
4:30-5:30pm	Beginner Violin class #1		Beginner Violin class #4 Beginner Cello class
5:30-6:30pm	Beginner Violin class #2	Beginner Violin class #3	Beginner Violin class #5

B. 3 days/week Program

Time	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays
4:15pm -5:15pm Ionian/Dorian/Phrygian Strings, Brass and Woodwinds and Int. Cello	Applied musicianship and instrument classes	Instrumental Classes	Instrumental Classes
5:15pm - 5:30pm	Snack time	Snack time	Snack time
5:30pm - 6:30pm Ionian/Dorian/Phrygian Strings, Brass and Woodwinds and Int. Cello	Instrumental Classes	Jr. Choir 5:30 - 6:30pm Senior Choir 5:30 – 6:15pm	Symphonic Orchestra
6:15pm - 7pm		Leadership class (senior students only)	

2025-2026 School Year Schedule

2025

Session 1

Classes from September 15- October 24, 2025

Concert 1: October 23rd at First St Andrews

Fall Break (no classes): October 27 – 31, 2025

Session 2

Classes from November 2- December 11, 2025

Concert 2: December 10th at The Aeolian Hall

Winter Break (no classes): December 15- January 9, 2026

2026

Session 3

Classes from January 12- March 13, 2026

Concert 3: March 12th at First St. Andrews

March Break (no classes): March 16 -20, 2026

Session 4

Classes from March 23- April 24, 2026

No Concert this session

April Break (no classes): April 27- May 1, 2026

Session 5

Classes from May 4 -June 12, 2026

Concert 4: June 11th at The Aeolian Hall

Summer Break begins from June 15 until September

Public Holidays (No Classes on these days)

October 15, 2025 Thanksgiving Day

February 16, 2026 Family Day

April 3, 2026 Good Friday

April 6, 2026 Easter Monday

May 18, 2026 Victoria Day

Summer Program

July-August 2026 Summer Program dates to be announced!

Program Policies

ATTENDANCE:

It is essential that program participants participate regularly in all program activities, including rehearsals, concerts, and outside opportunities that enrich the program experience. Participation is important for the musical and personal growth of your child, as well as the impact on their group.

We want to ensure that families are taking our free program seriously and understand that there are consequences for not complying with our Attendance requirements. We understand that parents have changes to their work schedule or are taking courses. ESA still needs to hear from you and provide a reason for your child's absence.

Our Policy:

1. We require 80% attendance in our program.
2. For every absence, parents must communicate with the El Sistema Aeolian office either by email (elsistema@aeolianhall.ca) or by phone (519) 679-2220 X 200 (ESA office) and provide a reason for your child's absence.
3. Senior students (Grade 10 and higher): attend 2 of 3 days per week, 1 day can be optional (not 50% attendance).

Parents must notify the ESA office about expected absences if they occur regularly on certain days for senior students. Leadership class: students or parents must notify ESA when their children do not attend Leadership class.

Legitimate Absences include Medical Appointment, Illness, Family reason, School exams, Work-related or Transportation issues.

Non-Legitimate Absences

1. If you plan to travel this year (vacation or otherwise) and your child will miss 1 month of classes during our programming time, please re-apply to El Sistema the following year.
2. If your child will regularly miss 1/3 of our classes and they are not a Senior Student (Grade 10 and up), then should not continue in our program.

Attendance will be periodically evaluated after each concert or program session. Families that have not been able to fulfill the attendance requirement, or who have missed important events will be invited to a meeting with the program coordinator/teacher to discuss participation and attendance strategies.

Participants will be given an opportunity to improve attendance, and program staff will work with families as much as possible.

If, after another concert or program session, attendance commitment is not consistent, we will discuss the student's place in the program and assess their spot in the program.

CODE OF CONDUCT:

All participants and their parents/guardians agree to abide by the ESA Code of Conduct. The code of Conduct policy is posted on the website.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POLICY

El Sistema Aeolian sessions take place at the El Sistema Education Campus (First St. Andrews Church at 350 Queens Avenue, London ON). Participants and their parents/guardians are responsible for their own transportation to and from the venue. Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring their child/children are checked in and out of the building and that they come to the door so that the staff/volunteers know they are releasing the children to the correct person and that no child is left behind.

Parents/Guardians shall ensure that the child is picked up from the designated entrance of the venue at the scheduled times. If the named person cannot pick up the child, the program team needs to be informed, in advance, of the name of the person picking up the child. If parents are consistently unable to pick up their children in a timely manner, their place in the program may be reevaluated.

EMAIL POLICY:

El Sistema participants who are in Grade 9 or in a higher grade are allowed to email their ESA teachers directly only with written parental consent and parent must be copied in all communications.

HEALTH ISSUES AND EMERGENCIES:

If a child has a medical condition or a major health issue that requires the use of a puffer or EpiPen, the parent/guardian is required to supply with us such a device to be stored on site for any such emergency as well as to provide training to the Program Coordinator on the use of the device to allow them to assist the child if necessary. In case of an event or a report of an event that we consider posing a serious risk to a participant's health, El Sistema Aeolian staff will take steps to ensure the child receives appropriate professional care (by calling 911 or taking the child to the hospital).

LEAVING THE PREMISES WITHOUT PARENTAL NOTIFICATION:

If a child leaves the hall during a scheduled rehearsal/lesson, the Aeolian team will inform the parent(s)/guardian immediately to ensure the child hasn't been picked up without prior notice and then, if necessary, inform the police who in turn may issue a missing child alert, as this is considered an emergency.

DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

El Sistema Aeolian welcomes participants of any race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin musical ability, and social background to the music education program and related activities.

As a program run by Aeolian Hall, we at El Sistema Aeolian expect and believe that everyone should be treated with dignity and equity, including the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Discrimination is at odds with our values.

TEAMWORK AND SUPPORT:

El Sistema Aeolian program is designed to develop leadership skills, cooperation, and teamwork. A positive and supportive attitude is expected from your child towards the program, peer participants, volunteers and teachers.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

El Sistema Aeolian's musical instruments are available free of charge to El Sistema Aeolian participants who need them to take part in the program's activities. There will be a \$30 damage deposit which will be refunded when the instrument is returned in good condition. El Sistema Aeolian participants and their parents/guardian agree to necessary cautions to take care of the instrument and to comply with the Instrument Loan Contract.

Parents are encouraged, whenever possible, to assist with the maintenance of instruments. Accessories such as rosin and strings can be purchased cheaply and help the program with costs.

FOOD POLICY:

All food brought to the program has to comply with Health and Safety regulations. If you want to send food with your child to be shared, please contact

the Program Coordinator in advance so that we can beware of any food allergies.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS:

The healthy and holistic development of your child is very important to us. If you have any concerns regarding the pedagogy, challenges that your child might be facing with other participants, or any other matter, please contact the El Sistema Aeolian Executive Director or the Program Coordinator.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to provide Aeolian Hall with their updated contact information. Please all phone numbers and email address to elsistema@aeolianhall.ca

COVID-19 & Other Illnesses

The Aeolian takes the safety of its patrons, volunteers, and staff very seriously. We will enforce all government regulations regarding COVID-19, as well as other policies we consider to be best practice. If students experience acute symptoms of COVID-19 or other illnesses, we ask that they stay at home. If they are recovering with mild symptoms, we ask that they wear a mask at El Sistema. If you or your child or family member residing or visiting with you develops a communicable illness, we need to know immediately so that we can take the necessary precautions. We expect cooperation with families and participants for all of our health and general safety protocols. Should you be unable to comply or have concerns about this policy we ask that you immediately contact the program coordinator.

El Sistema Aeolian Teaching Team, 2025-26

Darren Sigesmund, program coordinator

elsistema@theaeolian.ca

dsigesmund@theaeolian.ca

Lesley Andrew, jr. choir

landrew@theaeolian.ca

Susan Millar Boldissar, cello

sboldissar@theaeolian.ca

Maria Gonzalez-Iraheta, strings

mgonzalez@theaeolian.ca

Bruce Hoadley, woodwinds/brass

bhoadley@theaeolian.ca

Vladyslav Horbanovskyi, cello & double

bass vhorbanovskyi@theaeolian.ca

Menelaos Menelaou, strings

mmenelao@theaeolian.ca

Beth Zuwala, senior choir

bzuwala@theaeolian.ca

Contact Information:

Please contact us if you need further information, have comments, or would like to support the El Sistema Aeolian program:

El Sistema Education Campus
First St. Andrews Church
350 Queens Ave.
London, ON, N6B 1X6

Email: elsistema@aeolianhall.ca
Website: aeolianhall.ca/esa/
Tel: 519 679-2220

Want to learn more?

Visit Aeolian Hall
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