

Early Childhood Music School F.A.Q.s



How long has ECMS been in operation at Williamsburg United Methodist Church?



In September of 1989, Williamsburg United Methodist Church invited Cindy Freeman to establish the Early Childhood Music School. In the last 26 years, ECMS has grown from two classes of four-year-olds to

54 weekly classes of children, aged two months through nine years, and 6 classes of adult keyboard students.

Thousands of children (and their parents) have benefitted from the Early Childhood Music School's comprehensive program of singing, moving, listening, playing instruments and learning to read and write music. For the last 12 years, ECMS has been ranked by Musikgarten among the 85 exemplary music schools throughout the world. The ECMS instructors are certified by Musikgarten through its outstanding teacher training program. They are also certified through the international organization, Early Childhood Music and Movement Association (ECMMA).



What is the mission of the Early Childhood Music School?

ECMS, a weekday ministry of Williamsburg United Methodist Church, is offered to members and the community-at-large. Weekly classes in music-and-movement (taught by early childhood music specialists) are carefully constructed to:

- Promote music education as every child's God-given right;
- Equip future generations of church musicians;
- Generate enthusiasm for music through repeated, positive experiences;
- Provide holistic education at a time when children are developmentally receptive;
- Create a nurturing environment that enables children to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually;
- Affirm and support parents of young children while facilitating positive family interaction.



What is Elliot's Song?

In 1999, Cindy Freeman launched Elliot's Song in response to the United Methodist Bishop's initiative, "All God's Children." The goal was to assist teachers of preschool students in providing effective, early intervention for children who, because of financial disadvantage or developmental delay, were at risk for future academic failure.



The program serves students at the Head Start programs of both York County and James City County, the Bright Beginnings program of the W/JCC school system and the First Steps program of Child Development Resources. ECMS has continued to provide this service free-of-charge through grants, donations and fund raising activities.

A music-based educational setting provides opportunities for children to develop language skills, motor skills and socialization skills, also cognitive functioning and music literacy. Children from low income households are positively affected by music-based learning, yet these children have fewer opportunities available to them.

ECMS provides an appropriate curriculum and two certified music specialists, Tamara Carver and Kathy Parisi, who meet weekly with groups of children at the various centers to engage them in singing, chanting, moving, listening and playing instruments.



Elliot's Song is funded through grants and donations. This memorial fund is named for Elliot Provoncha (1997–2005) who attended the school with his sister, Clare. Elliot, the son of Megan and André

Provoncha, was born with multiple disabilities, but was profoundly responsive to music. The Provonchas and their extended family members continue to support *Elliot's Song* because they feel strongly that quality music education for children with physical or developmental disabilities is Elliot's finest legacy. The church's Local Outreach Committee also allots \$1,200 - 1,500 annually.

Twice, the WJCC Community Action Agency has awarded Williamsburg United Methodist Church its Community of Stars award for Elliot's Song.

Are provisions made for financially disadvantaged families to participate on-site?

Another important program of ECMS is the *Jessie Elizabeth Scholarship Fund*. This fund (also separate from the school's general operating budget) has enabled children to attend classes on-site who could not otherwise enroll because of financial disadvantage. 15 – 20 children attend the music school annually, tuition-free because of this fund. It is supported by ECMS parents and board members, Junior Woman's Club of Williamsburg, various groups within the church, as well as outside foundations and grantors.



Jessie Elisabeth Owens Dail (1987-1999), granddaughter of ECMS faculty member, Sandy Owens, was a student at ECMS. Like her "Mimi," Jessie loved music and continued to sing and play the saxophone until her tragic death at the age of twelve. Her mother, Deena, established a memorial fund to benefit children, animals and music education, all of Jessie's special causes. After Deena's generous gift to the school's scholarship fund in 1999, it was named for her beloved daughter.

How is the music school structured?



The school implements curricula from Musikgarten for each sequential level of instruction, accommodating every developmental stage. Musikgarten was chosen because of its comprehensive, full-spectrum of curricula and quality home materials for children, ages 2 months to 9 years. Musikgarten's internationally acclaimed authors provide scientifically-backed curricula and outstanding teacher trainers.

Fifty-four class times are offered Monday through Thursday, starting at 9:15 AM and ending at 7:15 PM. The classes are held in rooms 101, 102, 104, 304 and 306. Children are assigned according to these criteria: level of instruction, parents' scheduling needs and teacher availability.

What features set the Early Childhood Music School apart from other music schools in the area?

The most important distinction is that ECMS is the only school operating as a ministry of the church. The others are for-profit businesses which rent space. As a non-profit organization, ECMS is eligible for grants and donations to support its outreach programs.

Another important difference is that, in addition to Musikgarten training, the instructors are certified through the international Early Childhood Music and Movement Association. This requires them to take graduate-level courses for recertification every five years.



ECMS is the only school in the area that offers a full spectrum of levels from infant to adult, including Keyboard (group piano).

Other features of the school include informative Parent Orientation sessions held each September, also individual evaluations (for students, ages four and older) and carefully planned and executed closing programs that are presented at the close of each spring semester.



Child Development Resources and Norge Need Center refer children with special needs to ECMS because of its success rate in assisting these children to achieve in the areas of language and motor development. Our classes have included children with Down syndrome, Autism, Asperger syndrome, ADD, ADHD and myriad developmental delays. While ECMS instructors are cautioned against diagnosing special needs, often they are the first to observe learning issues and, therefore, can be helpful in directing parents to seek appropriate services.



Any further questions about the Early Childhood Music School may be addressed to:

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