

ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF TWO BEGINNING METHOD BOOKS FOR THE
BEGINNING ORCHESTRA CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

This report gives a detailed description and analysis of two method books used for beginning orchestra classes; *Essential Elements for Strings* by Michael Allen, Robert Gillespie, and Pamela Tellejohn Hayes, and *Strings Basics* by Terry Shade and Jeremy Woolstenhulme. Olathe School District #233 in Olathe, Kansas is doing research to decide whether to continue using their current method book, *Essential Elements*, or switching to a different method book, *String Basics*, for the 2014-2015 school year. Book 1 from each series is analyzed by looking at the order of concepts taught, how the concepts are introduced, how the book is laid out, illustrations, accompaniment CDs, the teacher's manual, and additional resources offered by the publishers. The books are then compared and critiqued before a personal recommendation is given on which book would be more beneficial to the students of Olathe.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Olathe School District #233 in Olathe, Kansas has been using *Essential Elements for Strings* as the district approved method book. This book has been used during the first publication and was continued through two more updated versions. Recently, the orchestra staff has been looking at a different method book, *String Basics*, to replace *Essential Elements*. A number of staff used *Strings Basics* during the 2013-2014 school year to try the new method and see the results. This report will analyze the *Essential Elements for Strings* book and *String Basics* as well as compare and contrast them against each other before a personal recommendation is made as to which book the district should use in the coming years. This is being done independently from the Olathe District Schools and is the opinion of the reporter.

Chapter 2 - *Essential Elements Analysis*

The most recent edition of *Essential Elements for Strings* was published by Hal Leonard in 2012 by Michael Allen, Robert Gillespie, and Pamela Tellejohn Hayes. Michael Allen is a Professor of Music Education at Florida State University, while Robert Gillespie is a Professor of Music at The Ohio State University. Pamela Tellejohn Hayes is a retired orchestra teacher who taught in Richland School District Two in Columbia, South Carolina. The musical arrangements were done by John Higgins who is the Managing Producer and Editor, Composer and Arrangers for the Hal Leonard Corporation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The first publication of *Essential Elements for Strings* came out in 1994. The book was updated in 2002 and published under the title *Essential Elements 2000 for Strings*. This edition had an updated layout and included different songs from the original book as well as included a CD and DVD. The most recent update was done in 2012 and published under the original title of *Essential Elements for Strings*. The only change from the 2002 edition to the 2012 edition was the disc that comes with the book. The layout and songs and illustrations of both editions are the same. The CD and DVD that were provided with the 2002 edition were changed to one interactive disc that students can use in a computer.

Order of Concepts

Beginning with the Basics

The first thing students see when they open up their *Essential Elements* book is a short history of the instrument, a description of how it sounds, and some well-known composers. These three things are unique to the individual instrument and are therefore different in each instrument's book. A student with a violin book will not have the same history, descriptions, and composers as the bass book and vice versa. Turning the page, the students are greeted by a black and white picture of their instrument and bow with the parts labeled. French and German bow are both included for the bass. On the same page, it also lists some basic care of the instrument along with a few accessories that will be needed, such as rosin and a shoulder rest.

When violin and viola students look to the other side of the page, they will see two black and white drawings of a person standing while holding their instrument. One is demonstrating guitar position while the other shows shoulder position and also displays the names of each string. Above the drawings there are step by step instructions of how to correctly achieve each

position. Cello students are met with a description of how to hold their instrument along with three illustrations. The drawings show a student standing with the endpin at the correct height so the scroll is at their nose, sitting while holding the cello away from themselves vertically, and finally the sitting position while labeling the strings. The bass shows two different ways of holding the instrument, sitting on a stool or standing, and also labels the strings.

Time to Pizzicato

Essential Elements includes yellow boxes when a new concept, including notes, is introduced. The first yellow box includes a lot of concepts at one. Included are: beat, quarter note, quarter rest, music staff, bar lines, and measures. These are things that most students should have already been introduced to in their general music classroom. The first four lines in the *Essential Elements* book focus on the open D and A strings on the music staff without showing the clef, time signature, or double bars at the end. These are added in on the next page with another yellow concept box along with the instruments staff and notes of the lines and spaces. There are nine lines devoted to learning the D and A string. *Essential Elements* keeps the note names written inside the note head for students to see.

The book goes on to teach how to pizzicato the notes of the D Major Scale. For students to learn correct left hand position, the first note *Essential Elements* teaches is G on the D string (this note is an open string for basses). This is accompanied by a black and white drawing of the instrument's neck and scroll and a hand showing the correct number of fingers down. By putting down all fingers at once, better hand position is learned quickly. For the next 13 lines, #10-22, there are short four to eight measure songs using D, E, F sharp, and G to reinforce these new notes. The book then progresses to learning the rest of the D Major scale. For the bass, this introduces shifting into third position for the C sharp and D. The book only spends 8 lines on these notes before moving on to songs that include all eight notes of the scale. EE progresses quickly since the note names are still written inside the note heads. The first song the students play without note names is line number 41 *Jingle Bells*. This is the longest song the students have played so far using the *Essential Elements* book. The next songs that are played without note names written in are familiar to most students: *Old MacDonald* and *A Mozart Melody* which is *Twinkle Little Star* along with a few others.

Let's Learn the Bow

Learning how to play arco occurs next in the *Essential Elements* books once the students have mastered the notes of the D major scale. The *Essential Elements* book is still only using quarter notes and quarter rests even after the bow is introduced. Throughout the pizzicato lines while the students were learning the D Major scale, there were six “Bow Builders” that started to introduce the correct bow hold. The Bow Builders use a list of instructions and illustrations to show the bow hold on a pencil. The instructions take the students through a process of making sure every finger is in the correct place and then has them do various exercises to ensure everything is where it should be and relaxed. The Bow Builders are different depending on which instrument the student plays with the bass book showing both French and German bows. *Essential Elements* spends just 7 lines, numbers 47-53, on bowing the open D and A strings before adding in all the notes from the D Major scale.

Moving on to Eighths and Halves

Beginning on line number 66, students are introduced to other note values besides the quarter note. *Essential Elements* starts with eighth notes in the Pepperoni Pizza rhythm which consists of four eighth notes in a row followed by two quarter notes. The next 11 lines are used to practice eighth note groupings in fours as well as twos. Eighth note rests are not yet included, though two-four time is also introduced simultaneously with the new note value. Next comes the half note and half rest. The students have only three lines to learn this new note value before playing songs that combine all the note values and rests learned so far.

A Few More Concepts

There is one more concept for each instrument before the *Essential Elements* books move on to new notes. The violins and violas begin to use their fourth fingers while the bass players learn third position on the D strings. To practice these skills, along with the other new concepts of eighth and half notes, students play through some simple exercises before playing the familiar songs of *Ode to Joy* and *Can-Can*. Also included is the first some to add a harmony section. On line number 89 *Bile 'em Cabbage*, students on the A line play the melody while violin, viola, and cello students play open A on the B line. Both lines use the same rhythm. The bass B line is different and helps provide a steady beat. *Can-Can* is also written with a melody and harmony

line with the A and B lines being the same for violin, viola, and cello. The bass again has a different B line to help keep the steady pulse.

G Major Scale

At this point, *Essential Elements* Book 1 is at the half-way mark. Students have learned the D Major Scale, pizzicato, arco, quarter and half notes and rests, and eighth notes. The notes of the of the G Major scale come next. For violin, viola, and cello, this means focusing on the G string while the bass students learn one note on their E strings on two notes on their A string. Since the note names stopped being written inside the note-heads back on line number 41, the four new notes being introduced starting on line number 93 are the first time students are having to learn new notes without reading the letters. Some songs the *Essential Elements* book has the students play using the G Major Scale are *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *This Old Man*. The book continues to use a mix of quarter, half, and eighth notes to keep reinforcing students' reading skills as they learn new notes. *Essential Elements* only focuses on the G Major scale for 10 lines before moving along to new concepts that are taught using the D Major scale.

Skill Builders

The concepts that come next in the *Essential Elements* book go very quickly with only a few lines spent on each new item. Students learn the dotted half note, ties and slurs, upbeat, and D.C. al Fine. While these concepts are being reviewed, bass players also learn half position. What follows these new concepts is a section called Skill Builders. Skill Builders have multiple lines of music and appear in yellow boxes. They are meant to “summarize and reinforce playing skills that have been recently learned”(page 167 teacher's manual). The first set of Skill Builders focus on the concepts recently learned including the dotted half note and slurs, and uses different variations of the G Major Scale as reinforcement. Skill Builders appear three more times in *Essential Elements Book 1* and also use scales to reinforce newly learned concepts.

Naturals

At this point in the book, students have been playing mostly in the key of D Major and have spent a little time using G Major. Next is the key of C Major so students must learn F and C Natural. This means violin and viola students must learn a new placement for their second finger, cellos learn a note with the second finger, and basses must learn a new shifting pattern on the G

string. *Essential Elements* has the students learn F natural first before going to C natural. The songs the book uses to practice these new notes use the same finger pattern but on different strings. This means the students are using the same finger patterns but on the D string for F natural and the A string for C natural. The exception for this is the bass. When the book introduces C natural to the bass, the student uses second finger in third position. Once the C Major Scale is introduced, the student is instructed to play C Natural with the fourth finger in second position. For the violas and cello, the C Scale that is introduced is starting on the C on the G string instead of open C string which the students have not yet learned.

More Practice

The next pages contain songs that are a mixture of C Major and G Major. The songs include all note values and concepts that have been learned so far. Some of the songs might be recognizable to students, such as *Bingo* and *The Birthday Song*.

Learning the C and E String

Next, the *Essential Elements* book covers the last string that students haven't played yet; this is the E string for violin and bass, and the C string for viola and cello. There is one line each to introduce each new note and then two lines to practice all the notes on the C string. After the C string is learned, the C Major Scale is played again but this time the viola and cello students start on the open C string.

The violins also learn their E String. This string is introduced with a low second finger for G natural, on the other strings the students were taught high second finger. The G Major scale is then reintroduced with the violins starting on the G on the D string rather than open G. Just like the C string for the violas and cellos, there is only one line introducing each new note before a couple practice lines follow.

All the Rest

The rest of the book is filled with concepts that are introduced in quick succession with only a few lines of practice on each. On line 150, the students are finally introduced to whole notes and whole rests. Line 167 is when staccato is learned. There is then another Skill Builder that focuses on G Major that includes staccatos and slurs. Next the book goes on to teach hooked bowing, forte and piano. The last Skill Builder is for Scales and Arpeggios using all the scales

the students have learned while using the *Essential Elements* book. This is D Major, G Major in both octaves for the violin, and C Major in both octaves for the viola and cello. Unlike the other Skill Builders, the scales and arpeggios are all written using the same rhythm and style.

Performance Spotlight

Lines 188-192 are called the Performance Spotlight. These are the last songs in the book and are all written with an A and B part. The A part is the same for all the instruments while the B part is different. This allows the students to be introduced to playing music where each instrument plays a different part. Three of the songs in this section are in D Major, one in G Major and one in C Major. The songs also include a variety of concepts such as ties, slurs, hooked bowing, and staccato so students continue to practice these skills. The students might recognize some of the songs like *William Tell Overture* and *Simple Gifts*.

The last full song in the book is different for each instrument. It is meant to be a solo for each instrument. A piano accompaniment is also included in each student book for auditions or other performances. The song for each instrument is a Minuet by Bach except for the bass which plays a March by Bach.

Last Things

The last two lines in the book focus on improvisation. Line 194 gives students eight whole notes on different pitches and encourages students to create a rhythm of their choosing while playing it. The last line in the *Essential Elements* book, line 195, gives a written B part of mostly open strings and lists six notes of the D Major Scale that students can use to improve for part A.

After the last songs, there is a fingering chart in each student book that has all the notes students have learned while using this book. On the last page is a Reference Index with definitions, composers, and world music that appeared in the book.

Teacher's Manual

The teacher's manual for *Essential Elements* is 272 pages long. At the beginning it has some resources for teacher to use at the beginning of the school year. There are many letters that are already written that can be sent to parents about starting orchestra, welcoming the students to

class, what supplies students will need and where to get them, and even a letter home if a student expresses they wish to discontinue in strings class.

There are piano accompaniments to each song in the book. The accompaniments attempt to be similar to the tracks on the CD, so they are more than simple I, IV, and V chords. At the top of each page is a small box that has the student's corresponding page number so the teacher can easily tell the students which page to view.

Chapter 3 - *String Basics Analysis*

Strings Basics Book 1 for orchestra was first published in 2010 by Kjos Music Press. Terry Shade, Jeremy Woolstenhulme, and Wendy Barden compiled this method book. Terry Shade received her Bachelor of Music Education degree from Loyola University New Orleans and has worked in the public school system for 16 years. She has conducted groups at the Southern Division MENC and at Midwest Clinic and has articles appear in the American String Teacher Association's publication. Jeremy Woolstenhulme graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Music Education in 2000 and continued his studies at University of Nevada Las Vegas where he earned a Master of Arts in cello performance. Woolstenhulme has also conducted groups at Midwest Clinic as well at the National ASTA Conference. He currently teaches orchestra in Las Vegas, Nevada in addition to composing music for string orchestra.

Wendy Bardon currently works in the Osseo Area Schools in Minnesota. She has taught elementary through college aged students. Bardon received a Bachelors and Masters degree in music education from the University of Minnesota before earning a Ph.D. in music with an emphasis in music education and musicology. She has authored and helped with many method books and series such as *Artistry in Strings*, and the *Standard of Excellence* band method series.

Order of Concepts

Beginning with the Basics

As students open to the very first page of *String Basics Book 1*, they are met with colored pictures of the instrument they play with the parts labeled. The bass book includes both the French and German bow. There is also a list of how to care for the instrument. On the other side of the page, there are color pictures of students holding the instrument while sitting. The violins, violas and cellos have two different views of the correct position, one from the front and another from the side. The bass shows how to hold the instrument correctly while using a stool or standing. Detailed instructions are next to each picture describing how the instrument is to be held. At the bottom of the page, a short history is given of string instruments.

Time to Pizzicato

After the students learn how to hold their instrument, they turn to the next page where they will begin learning how to play their instrument pizzicato. There is a blue section at the top of every page in *String Basics* that has which concept or note is focused on for each page. The first blue section has a lot of information which includes music staff, clef sign, quarter note and rest, time signature, pulse, and pizzicato. A circle within this blue box has any new notes that are introduced on the staff with the note name written below. The first two notes are open D and open A played as quarter notes. As the students play each line, the note names are written underneath the notes on the line where the note is first played. Lines number 1 through 22 focus only on open D and A so students are able to read those two notes on the staff well.

While playing open D and A, students are also introduced to half notes and how to count them. *String Basics* has a unique way of counting. For a measure that has two half note Ds, students are instructed to count it out loud as D two D four. This lets students feel the beat through the entire measure and hold the half note for the correct length. On page 6, there are more practice lines with open D and A using a mixture of quarter and half notes and rests while adding repeat signs at the end of select lines. Page 7 starts students counting and playing whole notes while still staying on open D and A. For a measure with a whole note, students are instructed to say out loud D two three four. This page also introduces duets and trios. Number 19 has three different parts; Part A plays whole notes, Part B plays half notes, and Part C plays quarter notes. Students must be able to count their own part and keep a steady pulse to play the lines together correctly. From this point on, the book uses a mix a note values in each line.

Putting Fingers Down

After the four pages of open strings, *String Basics* begins to add fingers on the D string. In *String Basics*, the first note added is E, which is first finger for all the instruments. At the top of the page inside the blue box is a color picture of the neck of the instrument with a student's hand showing the first finger down. Lines 23 through 27 have the students playing open D and first finger E only before moving on to F sharp and G. Each time a new note is introduced there is another colored picture of a student's hand with the correct number of fingers pressed down. As the students learn the notes on the D strings, basses begin playing first finger A on the G string instead of open A. Familiar songs are played using the notes on the D string such as Line

31 *Merrily We Roll Along* and Line 34 *Jingle Bells*. Lines 35 through 41 have the students playing all the notes on the D string. The songs continue to use a mixture of note values and adding a harmony line. The harmony lines consist of open strings but do not always have the same rhythm as the melody line.

The *String Basics* book continues to teach students the rest of the notes of the D Major scale by adding one finger at a time starting with B. Students spend page 11 of the *String Basics* book reinforcing the first six steps of the D Major Scale. On Page 12, C sharp is added in. *String Basics* does not have the basses shifting at this point in the book. For this reason, the basses must learn how to also play the B on the A string before adding in 4th finger C sharp. On page 16, while the violins, violas, and cellos play their first D Major Scale, basses learn a different way to play the scale. The basses start on the open D string and crawl up to the open G. Then, instead of adding fingers on G, they immediately jump to the open A string, then crawl up and end the scale on open D. The basses play the D Major Scale this way because the *String Basics* book does not teach the basses how to shift into third position until later. Once the basses learn to shift, the D Major Scale is reintroduced with the basses shifting into third position for C sharp and the high D of the scale.

Let's Learn the Bow

Strings Basics begins with the bow on page 14, line 58. The blue box at the top of the page shows a number of colored pictures. The images show the basic hand shape first without the bow and then with the bow being held at the balance point. There is a picture of the correct bow hold from the front as well as underneath so students can see the correct thumb shape.

The first notes the students play with the bow are half notes played on the rosin instead of the instrument. Lines 58 through 81 are devoted just to bowing open strings. During this time, violin, viola, and cello players are introduced to the open G string. All students learn bow lifts and the symbols for down and up bow also. While students are learning how to bow correctly, there are no songs that include a harmony line so students can focus purely on the bow.

Page 18 is when students move their bow hold to the frog from the balance point. Left hand fingers are also added back one note at a time. Line 87 *At Pierrot's Door* is the first line since learning the bow to have a harmony part. The book instructs that the harmony part can be played either pizzicato or arco. As notes of the D Major Scale are slowly added back as the

students become more comfortable with the bow, the basses learn how to shift to play C sharp and high D on the G string.

Violin and viola students will learn how to use their fourth finger next. Lines 105 through 113 are used to reinforce the notes of the D Major Scale, violin and viola fourth fingers, and shifting for the basses. More familiar songs, like Line 107 *Ode to Joy* and line 111 *Canon in D*, are incorporated for students to practice their new skills on.

Skills Demonstration Concert

Halfway through the book, there is a Skills Demonstration Concert. It is designed to be the first concert the parents will see. The prearranged concert is a progression of skills the students have learned since the beginning of the book. The concert is meant to be presented to parents to help explain what the students have been learning and the work the students have put in. Before each song, there is a short introduction that explains what skill the students learned to play that particular piece. The concert starts off with a simple pizzicato line consisting of open strings and, as the songs progress in difficulty, ends on a four part harmony piece that includes most of the concepts the students have learned.

G Major Scale

After the students play the concert from the *String Basics* book, notes on the G strings are learned next. Violin and viola students learn all the notes on the G string including 4th finger D. Basses learn 2nd finger G on the E strings, and since the book has already covered open A and 1st finger B, the only other note to learn for the G Major Scale is C natural. Instead of devoting one line to learn each new note, the notes G through D are learned in a single line. The notes are then practiced for the next four lines before playing the G Major scale which includes notes the students already know. To help students keep motivated, *Jolly Old St. Nicholas* is played using the G Major Scale in line number 130.

A Few More Concepts

String Basics' next focus is to learn slurs and ties with one page devoted to each concept. The ties and slurs are practiced using all the note values and note names the students have learned to keep reinforcing what students have previously learned. After ties and slurs, *String Basics* has the students learn eighth notes. To do this, the pepperoni pizza rhythm of four eighth

notes followed by two quarter notes is used, though this book does not identify the rhythm as pepperoni pizza. After the students have practiced the eighth notes over five different songs, some more familiar songs are used. Line 149 *Frere Jacques* uses the eighth notes with the G Major Scale, while line 150 *Can-Can, If You Can Can* uses eighth notes and the D Major Scale.

Next, the book dedicates a page each for F natural and C natural. The blue box continues to be at the top of each page with the new note inside a circle and a color picture of where the fingers are placed for the new note. Pick up notes are introduced simultaneously with C natural. A familiar song used to help teach these two new notes is Line 163 *Snake Charmer*. Even though F natural and C natural are introduced, the C Major Scale is not played just yet. The book first decides to focus on finger patterns that are used on each string when playing F natural and C natural. This is especially true for the violins who played these two new notes with a finger that already had a note. The cello and bass students learned a new finger when these two notes were taught. The violins and violas focus on a 1-2 finger pattern, when the 1st and 2nd fingers are close together a half step apart, and the 2-3 finger pattern, where the 2nd and 3rd fingers are close together a half step apart. Until now, the violin and viola students have only played using the 2-3 pattern, so they must learn that the finger pattern is not always the same on every string during a song. Familiar songs used to reinforce the finger patterns are Line 168 *Theme From "Surprise" Symphony* and Line 173 *Yankee Doodle*. Chances are students will recognize the Surprise Symphony melody even if they do not know the name. The key of C Major is also introduced on page 35 even though the book does not have the students play a C Major Scale until page 39.

The next concept learned in the *String Basics* book is the $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature and the dotted half note. Two pages are spent working on $\frac{3}{4}$ time while utilizing the notes of the D Major Scale, G Major Scale, and C Major Scale. Slurs and ties are also still being used as well as a pick up note to keep the students focused on reading the music. While most lines that *String Basics* used to practice these concepts are a mix of songs created for the book and small excerpts from well known composers, two pieces students might recognize but not know the title of are Line 186 *Sleeping Beauty Waltz* and Line 187 *Minuet* by Bach.

Learning the C and E String

The violins and bass move on to the E string. The violin learns five new notes starting on their open E and, using low 2nd finger for G natural, crawl up to 4th finger B. The basses learn

three notes starting on open E and crawling up to 2nd finger G. After the violins and bass practice their new notes for one page, the G Major Scale is introduced again so the violins can learn the octave that starts on 3rd finger G on the D string. Starting on line 195 G Major Upper Octave Scale, the *Strings Basics* book wants the violin players to play the notes with their 3rd finger a new way. The book instructs the students to only use their 3rd finger instead of holding down finger 1, 2, and 3. The same concepts are introduced in the very next line. The notes are highlighted in purple to help the students remember that they are to play those notes a new way.

On the next page, it's the viola and cello student's turn to learn their last string. Both instruments learn the open C strings and learn C, D, E, and F. 4th finger G is not included for the violas. After a number of practice lines with their new notes, the C Major Scale is introduced again, but this time with the violas and cellos starting the scale on the open C string instead of the C on the G string.

All the Rest

The last concepts taught in the *String Basics* book are dynamics, double stops, tempos, and bowing styles. The dynamics that are taught are piano, forte, and mezzo forte. To practice the different dynamics each scale that the students have learned so far is played using a different dynamic before other songs are played that have more than one dynamic marking written in.

Double stops and tempos are taught simultaneously. The double stops are played using open strings before fingers are used too. When fingers are first used with the double stops, the note that changes is on the higher of the two strings being played to avoid having to tunnel a string. Then the fingers are used on the lower of the two strings so a tunnel must be used or the open string will not be played clearly. The basses only practice the double stops when two open strings are being played, or when the higher of the two strings requires a finger.

Some bowing styles that are introduced are legato, staccato, spiccato, and accents. Only one or two lines are used to practice each of these new concepts.

Beginning on line 221, tempo markings are written in the students' books. No beats per minutes are listed next to the tempo in the student book, but are listed in the teacher's manual.

Scales and Chorales

Nearing the end of the book is a small section with scales and chorales. There is a scale and chorale for C Major, G Major, and D Major which are the three scales used in the *String*

Basics book. During this section, the violas and cellos play their first two octave C Major Scale and the violins play their first two octave D Major Scale. The basses continue to play only one octave for all three scales. The corresponding chorales are written in two parts. All the instruments have the same A part, but the B part is split into three different parts. The violin and viola each have their own B part while the cello and bass share the B part.

Instrument Solos and

Each instrument has its own solo at the end of the book. Each solo includes a D.S. al Fine and is between 1:30 and 1:45 minutes in length. They are all written using the same format of a two measure piano introduction, an 8 measure repeated section, an 8 measure middle section followed by a D.C. al Fine to end at the end of the previous repeated section. A tempo marking is given and a mixture of bowing styles, slurs, and bow lifts are used for each instrument. The solo for each instrument is written by Jeremy Woolstenhulme and has a piano accompaniment in the student book.

Conquest for String Orchestra

The very last item in the String Basic book is a piece titled *Conquest* written by Jeremy Woolstenhulme. *Conquest* is similar to a piece a sheet music. It is 52 measures long which includes a D.C. al Coda. Each instrument has a separate part and cannot see what the other instruments are playing. Many of the concepts taught throughout the book are a part of this piece. Different dynamics are used along with accents, slurs, and bow lifts. It is written in D Major and does not include any accidentals.

Glossary and Tips

A glossary with pictures is on the very last page in the book. The terms are listed and if the term has a symbol, it is included. On the inside of the back cover is a flap that is perforated for students to rip out. The top is a section that holds the DVD and lists what the DVD has on it. The other sections are meant to be ripped out so students can have them on the music stand as they practice. One is a list of practice tips that reminds students to play with good posture and asks if their playing has improved. The last item is a Fingerboard Diagram with all the notes that students have learned throughout the book.

Teacher's Manual

The teacher's manual for *String Basics* is 445 pages long. It starts out with a section called Strategies for Success which gives the authors' thoughts on reading fluency, ear training, and rote exercises. It includes a long section on how the authors like their room set up and gives suggestions on room layout so all students can be easily reached for hands on help.

Beginning on page 350 is troubleshooting for common problems with how beginning string players hold their instrument and bow. Pictures are included that show the incorrect way instruments.

Pages 335 through 442 are authorized for duplication for use in the classroom. There are instrument fingerboard diagrams that show each note that is included throughout the book. The student books have one in the back of their books but if they lose them, teachers can make more copies.

After the fingerboard diagrams, there are practice records that students can use to record to write down how long they practiced and places to write down what was performed well and what still needs improvement.

The rest of the material that teachers may copy are self evaluations, rubrics, ear training, theory, and note name quizzes. All of the worksheets correspond with a certain line or page of the student book and start with line 1 and go through to the end of the student book. There is a fill-in-the-blank page where students write in the parts of the instrument and bow. Two song searches are included that are similar to scavenger hunts. Each search tells which lines in the book to use and students have to find a line that fall in specific guidelines. Some examples of what the students are searching for is a song where every measure has the same rhythm, or a song that has all the notes of the D Major Scale, or all the notes in the song are played on one string. There are only worksheets for certain lines, not every song in the book.

There are ten scripts that students can use to take on the role of an interviewer and a famous composer and perform a small skit for the class. Some of the composers are Bach, Beethoven, and the authors of the book Terry Shade and Jeremy Woolstenhulme.

Using folk songs that are placed throughout the book, students can do three different projects. Instructions are given along with a rubric in the teacher's manual so students can explore the folk songs further.

There is a year-end reflection that students can fill out that asks for a favorite memory from strings class and what they would tell a younger student about class among other things.

The last thing that teachers are allowed to copy and use in class is a card game called Frings! The cards have a different note on them and students have each have 4 cards in the hand and take turns drawing a card from the stack and discarding so their hand has all open strings, or notes that are all played on one string, or notes that are played with the same finger.

Chapter 4 - Comparison and Critique

This comparison and critique is the opinion of the reporter and no one else. It is being critiqued based on the reporter's experiences while using both *Essential Elements for Strings* and *String Basics* with many different elementary school 5th grade beginning orchestra classes. In the schools that either book was used, only half the book was taught during the course of the 5th grade school year. This is because 5th grade beginning orchestra class meets for 30 minutes 2 or 3 times a week. 6th grade is located in the middle school where they continue book 1.

Pictures and Diagrams

Starting at the very beginning of both books, the pictures are the first things that stand out. The pictures of the parts of the instruments are very different. *String Basics* has a clear picture while the *Essential Elements* picture is extremely dark.

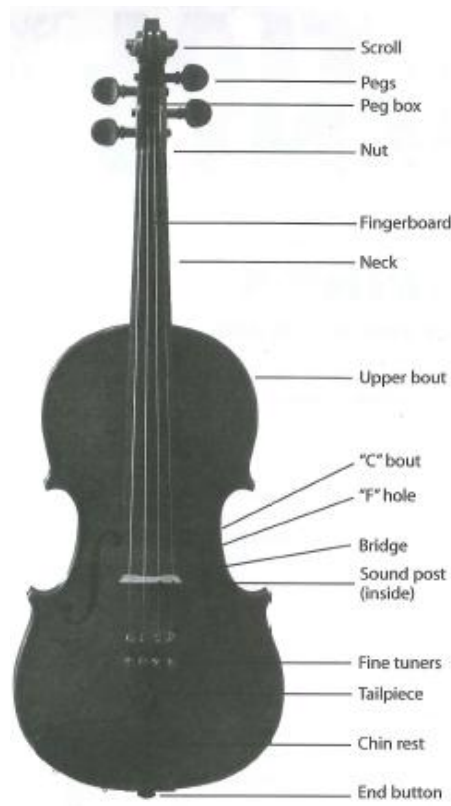


Figure 4-1 *Essential Elements* Parts of the Violin (Allen, 2002, p. 2)

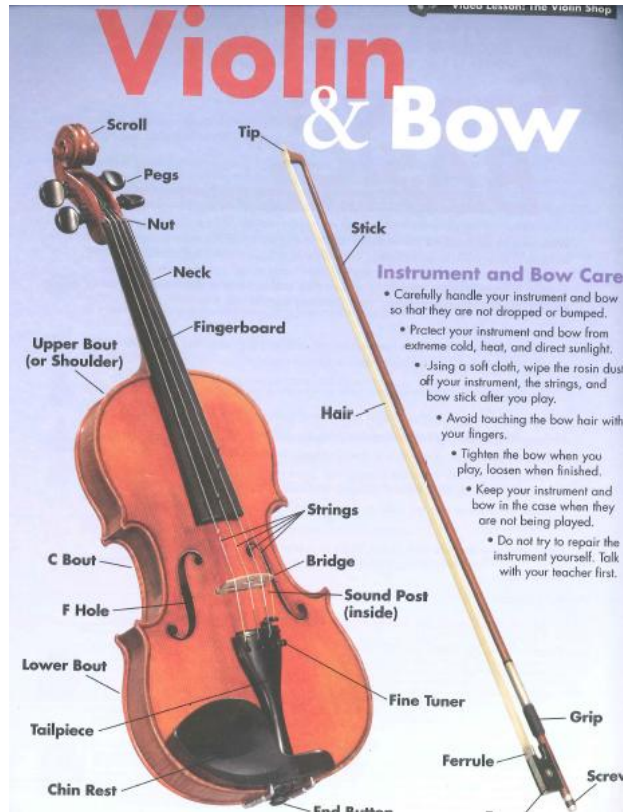


Figure 4-2 *String Basics* Parts of the Violin (Shade, 2010, p. 2)

All the diagrams in *Essential Elements* are black and white drawings while *String Basics* uses color pictures of students. This is especially clear towards the beginning of the book when students are being taught how to correctly hold their instrument. The pictures of actual students are clearer and the different angles give a better representation of the correct way to hold the instrument.

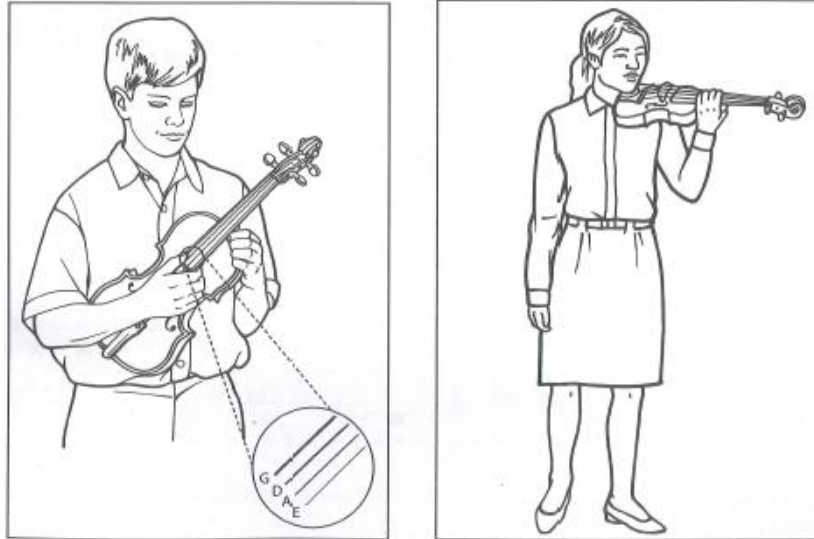


Figure 4-3 *Essential Elements* Violin Positions (Allen, 2002, p. 3)

Guitar Position

- Sit tall on the edge of your chair, feet apart, flat on the floor.
- Take your violin from the case with the left hand grabbing the neck.
- Place the violin in "rest position" with the bottom of the instrument resting on your left knee. The violin should face away from you.
- Tuck the instrument under your right arm, with the scroll slightly aimed towards the ceiling.
- With your right hand, place your four fingers on the side of the fingerboard and allow the thumb to rest above the strings in preparation for plucking.

Shoulder Position

- From guitar position, use your left hand to hold the instrument around the neck at the shoulder as you begin the transition.
- Extend your left arm (with the violin) straight out, parallel to the floor, at about the 10 o'clock position. The violin should face away from you.
- Turn your head to the left and flip your instrument over and onto your arm. Your arm is still extended straight with the elbow locked.
- With your right arm, guide your violin slowly up the arm and onto the shoulder, nestling your chin into the chin rest.
- With your head still turned and looking down the violin strings, give the instrument a few pats to make sure you have found your shoulder, not your collarbone or chest.

Figure 4-4 *String Basics* Violin Positions (Shade, 2010, p. 3)

Once the books starts using music, the sections at the top of each page are similar to each other. Both list the concepts that are going to be taught and show the corresponding symbol.

THEORY

Beat = The Pulse of Music The beat in music should be very steady, just like your pulse.

Quarter Note ♩ = 1 Beat of Sound Notes tell us how high or low to play, and how long to play.

Quarter Rest ♪ = 1 Beat of Silence Rests tell us to count silent beats.

Music Staff The music staff has 5 lines and 4 spaces.

Bar Lines Bar lines divide the music staff into measures.

Measures The measures on this page have four beats each.

Figure 4-5 *Essential Elements* Example of Concepts (Allen, 2002, p. 4)

Steps to Success:

- Play quarter notes and quarter rests
- Play open D and A with pizzicato in guitar position
- Establish group pulse
- Understand symbols on the staff

Pluck Open D and A

Music Staff = 5 lines — 4 spaces

Treble Clef — Bar Line — Measure — Double Bar Line

Ledger Lines

Quarter Note = ♩ = 1 beat Quarter Rest = ♪ = 1 beat

Time Signature = $\frac{4}{4}$ = 4 beats per measure
= quarter note receives 1 beat

Pulse = a steady series of beats in music

Pizzicato = *pizz.* = to pluck the string with the right hand index finger

Figure 4-6 *String Basics* Example of Concepts (Shade, 2010 p. 4)

The Music

Essential Elements

Essential Elements begins by teaching the open strings D and A. The note names are written inside the note head and each note is introduced quickly.

6. JUMPING JACKS Identify the clef and time signature before playing.

7. MIX 'EM UP

Figure 4-7 *Essential Elements* Example of Open Strings (Allen, 2002, p. 5)

The notes on each string are introduced one right after the other. Practice lines with all the notes on the string are played after all the notes have been introduced. By line 32, students are playing the D Major Scale.

Essential Elements has the note names written inside the note heads from line 1 through 36. After a short line consisting of notes on the D strings, students are expected to play *Jingle Bells* as their first song without note names written in.

Students find this difficult to go from relying on note names to suddenly being forced to read the note on the staff. Most had been reading the actual letter inside the note head rather than the line or space the note was on. Using the letters written in for so long allowed students to get away with not learning how to read the staff.

Along with keeping the note names written in, *Essential Elements* only has the students playing quarter notes and rests until line 66. The notes of the D Major Scale and playing with the bow are taught before different note values and introduced. The note value that is taught after quarter notes is eighth notes, followed by half notes and rests. Dotted half notes are introduced on line 103 and whole notes and rests are not taught until line 150 which is towards the end of the book.

String Basics

String Basics only has note names written in on lines 1, 2, and 6. Lines 1 and 2 are introducing the D and A string so the letters are written in along with the word 'rest' under the rests. The *String Basics* book instructs the students to say the notes out loud and count while they play. For this reason, whenever a new note value is introduced, the note name and counting is written in, but usually only for the first measure.

8. "A" Is It

pizz.

"A 2 A 4 R R R R"

9. Play and Rest

pizz.

The image shows two musical exercises on a single staff in 4/4 time. Exercise 8, titled "8. 'A' Is It", starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note on the second line (A) with the instruction "pizz." above it. The second measure contains a quarter note on the second space (2). The third measure contains a quarter note on the second line (A). The fourth measure contains a quarter note on the second space (4). The fifth measure contains a whole rest (R). The sixth measure contains a whole rest (R). The seventh measure contains a whole rest (R). The eighth measure contains a whole rest (R). Below the staff, the notes and rests are labeled: "A 2 A 4 R R R R". Exercise 9, titled "9. Play and Rest", also starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note on the second line (A) with the instruction "pizz." above it. The second measure contains a whole rest. The third measure contains a quarter note on the second space (2). The fourth measure contains a whole rest. The fifth measure contains a quarter note on the second line (A). The sixth measure contains a whole rest. The seventh measure contains a quarter note on the second space (4). The eighth measure contains a whole rest.

Figure 4-8 *String Basics* Example of Open Strings (Shade, 2010, p. 5)

Since the note names aren't written in, *String Basics* gives more lines of practice for each note so students can focus on learning the lines and spaces of the staff and counting rhythms. The first four pages, or lines 1 through 22, only have the students playing open strings but introduces quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes and all the corresponding rests. Playing simple duets and trios are also introduced while using open strings to make sure students focus on the counting and steady beat in order to play together.

Bowing

Essential Elements and *String Basics* introduce bowing in different ways. *Essential Elements* slowly incorporate Bow Builders simultaneously with new notes so students can slowly learn how to hold their bow. The pictures for each include different views of the bow hold. *Essential Elements* continues to use drawings while *String Basics* uses pictures of students.

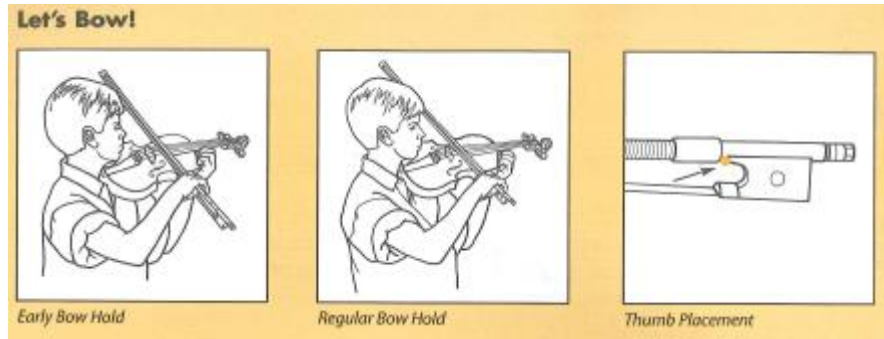


Figure 4-9 *Essential Elements* Example of Bow Hold (Allen, 2002, p. 16)

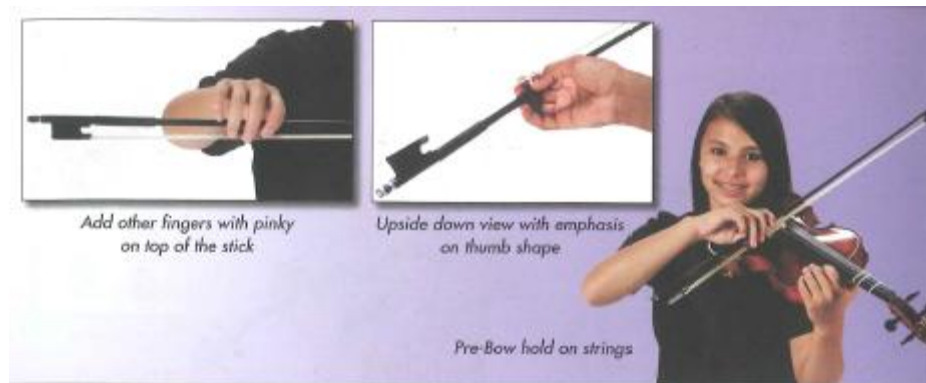


Figure 4-10 *String Basics* Example of Bow Hold (Shade, 2010, p. 15)

Once students learn the bow hold, the only note value played is quarter notes. This can lead to students not learning how to use the whole bow.

String Basics wait until students have played the D Major Scale pizzicato to start bowing. The first note value played with the bow is a half note which allows the students to use more of the bow. On the two pages of open string bowing, quarter note, half notes, and whole notes are used. Both books have the students playing on their rosin to practice the arm and wrist motions before progressing to the actual instrument.

Playing with Multiple Parts

Essential Elements has the students all playing the same melody line until line number 89 *Bile 'em Cabbage*. After that line, there are only a few other lines in the book that have a melody line. This book waits until further in the book to have students playing a melody line and a harmony line. During the 5th grade year, some schools didn't have a chance to reach that far in the book and it was taught in 6th grade instead.

In the *String Basics* book, students are playing in multiple parts from the very beginning.

19. Three-Way Pizzicato - Trio



Figure 4-11 *String Basics* Example of Multiple Parts (Shade, 2010, p. 7)

This increases the students counting ability and independency. Since the students had been reading the notes on the staff and counting the rhythms, students were able to play the simple harmony parts fairly easily.

Music Accompaniment and Videos

Each student book comes with a disc that can be inserted into a computer for extra features. Both method books have accompaniment tracks that play each line twice. The first time a line is played, the solo line is played along with the accompaniment, the second time the line is played, just the accompaniment track is played so students can play the song karaoke style. The *String Basics* disc comes with all the line in Book 1. Unfortunately, *Essential Elements* only contains line 1 through 72 on the disc. Accompaniments for the rest of the book can be purchased separately from the book.

The discs for both method books must be inserted into a computer or DVD player in order to work. Neither one will work when put in a boom box or stereo system. This might

hinder some classrooms that don't have access to a computer. There were two discs that came with *Essential Elements 2000 for Strings* edition; a CD with the accompaniments that will work in a stereo system and a DVD for the computer or DVD player. *Essential Elements* combined these two discs into one for the latest edition.

Also on the discs are videos that correspond with lessons taught in the book that can be used in class or viewed by the students at home.

Chapter 5 - Recommendation

While both *Essential Elements* and *String Basics* are good tools to use in beginning string classes. From the very beginning of the book, *String Basics* reinforces reading notes on the staff, counting rhythms using multiple note values early, and independent part playing, I would recommend that the Olathe School district begin using *String Basics* by Terry Shade and Jeremy Woolstenhulme. It will set students up for success as they enter 6th grade orchestra in the middle school.

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Allen, M., Gillespie, R., & Hayes, P. T. (2002). *Essential Elements for Strings Teacher Manual Book 1*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard.

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