

Special Music School at Kaufman Music Center

GENERAL INFORMATION
Kindergarten, Grades 1 & 2

**APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR
ADMISSION 2014-2015:**

**KINDERGARTEN:
DECEMBER 2, 2013**

**1ST & 2ND GRADE:
JANUARY 24, 2014**

About the School

Special Music School, P. S. 859, is the first and only public elementary school in the United States that combines a full academic program with performance-oriented music training within the regular school day starting in Kindergarten. The music program includes private instrumental lessons and classes in music theory, history and chorus. The academic program emphasizes an integrated learning approach that develops problem-solving skills through hands-on cooperative learning experiences. The dedicated staff and faculty are committed to helping each child realize his/her full potential musically, academically, and socially.

The Special Music School is a public/private partnership between the New York City Department of Education and Kaufman Music Center. As a public school, Special Music School is tuition-free. The Department of Education, through tax levy funds, provides the academic program and materials, while Kaufman Music Center, through its annual fund-raising efforts, provides each student with a full, merit-based music scholarship. The School is located in Kaufman Music Center's facility at 129 West 67th Street, west of Broadway.

Admission to Special Music School

Up to 15 students will be admitted to the Kindergarten class for September 2014. Those admitted will have demonstrated a high level of musical giftedness through a comprehensive evaluation that begins in the fall of 2013. In addition, there may be a limited number of places for new students in grades 1 and 2. Instrumental auditions are NOT required for students applying for Kindergarten through grade 2.

Special Music School is committed to serving a student body that reflects the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic composition of the community. The school strives for excellence and diversity in all respects and encourages all interested families to schedule their child for an initial assessment. If you feel that the rigorous integrated education offered at Special Music School is consistent with the educational goals you have for your child, you are encouraged to apply, even if you are not certain that your child is musically gifted.

The teachers at Special Music School expect the students to achieve on a high level in both academics and music. Because of the dual focus of the curriculum, students and their parents should be prepared to work longer and harder towards meeting the educational goals. Successful continuation at the School is contingent upon consistent progress in all elements of the curriculum, including music classes such as music theory and chorus.

Parental support is essential. This support includes setting daily time aside to monitor and supervise music practice in addition to providing guidance on academic and music homework assignments. A music background on the part of either parent is not necessary.

Information Sessions and School Tours

Special Music School holds four Information Sessions for grades K-8 spaced throughout the school year; these are listed on an accompanying sheet. These hour-long sessions will provide parents with the opportunity to hear about the mission and daily life of the School, and to have many of your questions answered. No reservations are necessary for the Information Sessions.

Unfortunately, because of space and time considerations, tours of the School are not provided. Tours of the School are conducted once an applicant has been provisionally accepted and scheduled for a final interview.

Assessment Information

Researchers, expert practitioners in early childhood education, and master musicians have worked to develop a reliable and valid measure of musical giftedness for use by Special Music School. This assessment includes hands-on, interactive musical tasks that focus on the child's perception and performance. This assessment attempts to avoid cultural bias and is not dependent on prior music training. Through direct, systematic observation, data will be collected that will help us to evaluate your child's musical potential, and his or her ability and desire to participate in an intensive musical program.

First Round

All applicants will take part in a small group session, similar to a music class, during which they will be asked to take part in a variety of musical activities, including singing and moving to music. This group session will last approximately 25 minutes. After the group session, each child will have a brief (10 minute) individual assessment designed to ascertain the child's basic musical aptitude. (Note: some children may have a short wait between the two sessions.)

Subsequent Rounds

Children scoring above a certain level on these two tests will be called back for a longer individual assessment, after which they will be provisionally accepted to the School, pending an interview; placed on a "delayed decision" list; or not accepted. Children on the delayed decision list may be asked to retest again toward the end of the assessment process. (See below for additional information regarding grade 2 candidates.)

Discontinuation

Children scoring below a certain level on the first round tests will not be asked to continue. There are many factors that may affect a child's performance on a given day, and children who are not recommended for advancement to the next level may be deeply talented. It is the policy, however, not to retest children at any level except in truly exceptional circumstances.

Applicants for Grade 2

In addition to the procedure described above, applicants for second grade who have begun study on an instrument may have the opportunity to play a short piece on their instrument at their individual assessment (second round). Children who have not yet begun to study an instrument will be exempt and will not be penalized. However, because of the fast-paced nature of the curriculum, evidence of prior study will be considered as part of the child's application.

Notification

Children who advance to the second round of testing can anticipate that s/he will be called for a second assessment two to four weeks after the first round. If your child does not advance, you will be notified informing you of the decision. Please contact our office only if you have not received word within four (4) weeks of your child's assessment. Parents will be contacted with a decision as soon as possible after the second round. The School has a rolling admissions policy, so it is important to schedule your child's assessment as early as possible. Assessments will continue until each class has been filled.

Final Interview

The final step in the assessment process is an interview with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the applicant, conducted by a representative each from the music and academic departments of the School. While there is no "score" on this interview, it is a chance for both the family and the School to determine whether this is going to be the proper environment for the child. During the interview, it is common for the applicant to spend time in the Kindergarten, first, or second grade classroom, depending on their prospective grade level. If time allows, it may also be possible for the family to tour the School at this point.

Following a successful interview, the family will be sent an official acceptance letter and contract, or informed that a place will not be made available for the child. If a child is accepted into Special Music School, the family can either accept or reject the offer, or request the scheduling of a school tour, if this has not already happened. The school tour must be scheduled within two weeks of the date of the acceptance letter, so that there will be sufficient time to meet with other families, if you choose not to accept the offer. If there has been no communication from the parents at the end of two weeks, the child will be placed back on the delayed decision list.

Instrument and Teacher Placement

Once the School has received a signed acceptance letter and contract from the family, the Music Director will assign the student an instrument, in consultation with the student and the parents. The Music Director will also select a private teacher for the student, based on musical and personal compatibility. While efforts will be made to accommodate student preference for a particular instrument or teacher, it is important to realize that not all such requests can be accommodated.

Instructions for the Application Process

1. Application Form

Please complete the enclosed application form and mail/drop it off as soon as possible to the address indicated. Emailed or faxed applications are not preferable. Make sure you complete the entire application, which includes a questionnaire. Applications will be processed in the order in which they are received, and assessment spots fill up quickly, starting in October. We cannot guarantee being able to schedule assessments for any applications received once the assessment schedule is full. Applications for Kindergarten received after the December 2, 2013 deadline (January 24, 2014 for grades 1 and 2) will be processed only if there is space available in the assessment schedule – an unlikely scenario – so please be sure to send your application as early as possible.

2. Birth Certificate

A copy of the child's birth certificate must be enclosed with the application. Candidates for the 2014 Kindergarten class must have been born between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2009.

3. Teacher Evaluation Forms

If your child is currently attending an educational program, his/her academic (classroom) teacher must complete and mail the enclosed Academic Teacher Evaluation form by the application deadline. If submitted with the application, please ask the teacher to give it to you in a sealed and signed envelope to ensure the confidentiality of the evaluation. If your child is passed on to a round 2 assessment prior to the final application deadline, you will be notified and asked to get the ATE form in before the round 2 assessment occurs, as the assessment panel will need to see the evaluation at that time.

4. Assessment Appointment

After we have received your completed application—along with a copy of your child's birth certificate—we will contact you to schedule an appointment for your child's assessment. **We highly recommend that upon applying, you add the following SMS Admissions e-mail to your e-mail provider's address book/safe list: smsa@kaufmanmusiccenter.org.** Although we make every attempt to be sure that our communications are received, adding the admissions e-mail to your address book/safe list will prevent our notices from going to junk mail. You can expect to be contacted approximately two weeks before the assessment date. Our volume is high; applicants for Kindergarten may not be contacted before December, and grade 1 and 2 applicants will not be called for an appointment until late February or March.

Suggestions for Parents

1. Please return the application immediately. The earlier your child is assessed, the earlier s/he can be accepted.
2. **IMPORTANT:** Please arrive 20 minutes before your assessment appointment. Children who arrive at the last minute are less likely to be relaxed and confident in the session. Children who arrive early have time to get used to a new location, meet other children, use the restrooms, etc. Because there are many applicants and a limited number of assessment slots, we will most likely not be able to reschedule your child if you are late for your appointment, and Special Music School is under no obligation to do so.

3. You must notify us immediately if you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment, so that we can attempt to reschedule. Appointments missed without prior notice will not be rescheduled.
4. There is no preparation necessary for the first round of assessment. Please do not try to coach your child beforehand, as this will only raise anxiety and hinder performance.
5. Before the assessment, please make sure that s/he has a good night's rest, eats a good breakfast or lunch, and is dressed in comfortable, non-restrictive clothing. Children may be asked to remove their shoes and socks in the group session, so tights are not recommended. In case of inclement weather, please bring a comfortable change of shoes for your child. Explain that s/he will be taking a music "class" with other children and that parents are not included, but will be waiting in a nearby room. You may want to mention that there will also be a short one-on-one session with a music teacher, during which s/he will play some interesting musical listening games. You can also help by making sure your child uses the restroom shortly before going in for assessment activities.
6. Be prepared to spend as much as an hour with us on the assessment day. You may want to bring along a favorite book and snack for waiting time. Please be sure to arrive **20 minutes** before your child's session.
7. Please be sure that we are able to reach you easily during the day by phone, email, and/or fax, if available, since the assessments after the first round may be scheduled on relatively short notice (within a week's time, in some cases).

If you have any questions or need assistance with the application, please contact the Admissions Office at smsa@kaufmanmusiccenter.org (preferred) or 212.501.3390. We will respond as soon as possible.