



GUITAR EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Strategic Plan

Our Objective:

To create a world-class **Guitar Education Institute**.

The Details:

GEI is a new dedicated staff division within ACG, supported by Operations, Development, and Education. It is responsible for replicating ACG Education in communities across the world. Maintaining the values of ACG Education DNA, Music First, and Five Elements, GEI's initial focus is replicating classroom guitar programs.



Vision:

ACG Education in every school.

What It Does

- **Teacher Partners:** Our three-year target is to double active teaching partners from approximately 250 to 500, with continued growth thereafter.
- **Product & Service Development:** GuitarCurriculum.com, Method Books, Services
- **Teacher Training:** National summits, Year-round virtual training, possible cohort models, pre-summit virtual units to augment or shorten trainings for scale.
- **Certification:** Develop certification including recognition for teaching mastery, and special designation for Master Trainer. This unlocks the opportunity for approved regional leaders to offer monetized training and consulting on behalf of GuitarCurriculum, establishing an incentive structure for certification partners. Note: With or without certification, GuitarCurriculum materials and training will be available for all teachers.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Work with individuals and institutions for training events, promotion, and other beneficial collaborations (e.g., USC, Internal Creations, St. Louis). Brand partnerships for guitars, strings, and other mutual benefits.
- **Sales & Marketing:** Branding, Speaking/Demo, Customer Data Management, Customer Outreach & Service, Communications
- **Distribution:** Navigate district and state textbook approvals and purchasing.
- **Higher Education:** Course creation with potential embedded Level 1 certification, Higher Ed partnership development, advocacy for guitar education viability, virtual 'career development' classroom visits.
- **Research and Publication:** Commission and research impact studies, publish findings.
- **Evaluation:** Support and advocate for scholastic evaluation methodology like Concert & Sight-Reading to ensure teaching quality. Offer this service for a fee nationwide.

Year One Priorities

Strategic Training Partners: Develop and execute a model for engaging external partners to lead trainings. Focus on “Teaching Guitar” workshops and also identify one or more partners in each ACG training to develop new leaders.

District Professional Development: Expand PD Services with focus on large district providers like El Paso, Loudoun County, Austin ISD, and Brownsville.

Increase Teacher Training: Provide four training summits in Summer 2027. Likely candidates include Austin, NYC, GA/FL, SC, ABQ, STL, CLE.

Curriculum & Technology: Move Training, Summit Brand, Registration, Messaging, etc. to GuitarCurriculum domain. Develop User Health Score systems. Release Flamenco Unit. Develop consumable workbooks.

Price and Package: Review offerings for districts, subscriptions, summits.

TX Advocacy: Support and advocate for classroom guitar and its place in institutional/professional structures. Increased adoption of Region Guitar in Texas UIL Regions. There are currently only two.

Higher Education: Include GuitarCurriculum in 3+ existing college education courses. Develop a structured course for guitar education centered around GuitarCurriculum on at least one college campus.

PR and Branding: In partnership with ACG Communications, increase visibility of ACG Education and GuitarCurriculum through earned media coverage, paid advertisement, conference participation, and speaking engagements.

Our Key Metrics:

- Teaching Partner Subscriptions
- **User Health Score:** a composite measure of teacher engagement and program vitality
- Sales & Contract Revenue
- Certifications
- Training Participation (# of teachers)
- Concert & Sight-Reading Participation (# of programs/students)
- Strategic and Higher Education Partnerships



Why this program and why now?

When students have access to the arts, they show up more, achieve more, and thrive more. According to the Texas Cultural Trust's 2025 State of the Arts Report, students who are highly engaged in the arts are up to 46 percent more likely to pass Texas Success Initiative criteria and twice as likely to meet AP and IB standards. Expanding access to fine arts education is a proven and powerful way to help Texas students succeed. In the 2024-25 school year, ACG-supported Title 1 campuses saw guitar students outperform their peers in every STAAR-tested subject.

Yet according to the Texas Education Agency, only about 15% of Texas high school students enroll in Fine Arts courses each year, with even lower participation in rural and high-poverty districts where fewer opportunities are offered. Suburban secondary schools offer 59% more arts courses than rural schools, and students in high-poverty districts have access to significantly fewer music classes and ensembles. These gaps mean many students - especially students in smaller or lower-income districts - have limited access to meaningful music instruction.

Guitar is the most popular instrument in the world. Guitar is uniquely suited to expand arts access for students: it's popular, affordable, culturally relevant, and approachable for older beginners who cannot access orchestra or band programs later in high school.

Through rigorous, for-credit classical guitar programs in schools, Austin Classical Guitar (ACG) has brought new and different students to the benefits of fine arts by the tens of thousands. In Austin ISD - where ACG has built guitar programs in every middle and high school, including the juvenile justice system - guitar has become the second-most enrolled music area district-wide surpassing choir and orchestra. Growth in Austin has been concentrated in Title 1 schools, with particularly strong enrollment among Hispanic

boys who are underrepresented in fine arts in general, yet make up a large percentage of our statewide student population. ACG has more than 250 teaching partners spanning over 25 Texas school districts, 30 US states, and 10 countries.

With a proven and scalable 25-year history of service combining ACG's GuitarCurriculum website and method books, Five Elements methodology, teacher training, and administrative advocacy, establishing this Guitar Education Institute (GEI) will bring the benefits of quality performing arts engagement to tens of thousands more young people across America for years to come.



Why are we the best team for this?

Story of ACG Education & GuitarCurriculum

In 2001, ACG received a \$6,000 grant from the MFS Foundation to provide free guitar lessons for low-income students. In carrying out the project at Austin's McCallum High School, we realized that many young people were interested in playing guitar but had no broad opportunity to do so in schools. In 2004, the program had grown, and in seeking to improve our methods we discovered America had no infrastructure for school-based group guitar instruction. ACG then invested \$250,000 over four years to develop a unique one-to-many guitar teaching methodology, launching it online at **GuitarCurriculum.com** in 2008. Within a year, teachers around Texas and beyond began asking for GuitarCurriculum access and training.

That same year, Austin ISD completed an audit of arts services and discovered that low-income schools had fewer arts options, lower quality programming, and significantly lower enrollment than more affluent schools. At the time, however, ACG had five Title 1 school guitar programs, and all were highly enrolled. In the ensuing years, **the district asked ACG to build guitar in all its middle and high schools** specifically to help address the challenges they were facing with equity and access. By 2022, ACG-supported guitar programs had more students enrolled than any other Austin ISD music class in middle and high schools besides band.

In 2009 the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work conducted a **social impact study** on ACG Education programming. The results found, in particular, that students deeply valued feeling a sense of belonging, a rigorous yet forgiving atmosphere, and being an important part of something, in addition to expected results like boosts in self-esteem after successful performances.

In 2010 **Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired** wished to begin guitar instruction for the first time, but no resources existed in Braille, so ACG installed an instructor and converted GuitarCurriculum resources into Braille. Later we would invest over \$150,000 in creating the world's first lifelong learning system for blind and visually impaired learners (now used worldwide).

Also in 2010, ACG was approached to begin teaching guitar to incarcerated youth at Gardner Betts Juvenile Detention Center in Travis County. Two years later, in partnership with the district, ACG converted the class into **Texas' first and only for-credit performing arts course for incarcerated youth**. This service is now being provided in four detention centers in Travis, Williamson, and Dallas counties, alongside a suite of services for court-involved youth.

In 2013 ACG invested in a part-time **performance engagement** artist to provide high-quality performance and mentorship experiences in all its area schools. A key result of this initiative was a rapid and dramatic rise in UIL participation, especially from Title 1 Schools. Within three years, guitar more than quadrupled in size, becoming the largest single instrument in the Region 13 contest.



In 2014 ACG partnered with Austin ISD to create the first-ever large ensemble **Concert & Sight Reading** adjudicated event for guitar. This is critical infrastructure for quality control - in alignment with the UIL procedures for choir, orchestra, and band. As of 2026, ACG administers this contest in six locations across Texas.

In 2015 ACG developed its first **Youth Orchestra** to partner with the adult community ensemble program that had been running since 1999. There are now seven such orchestras, which provide scaled opportunities for youth and adult students to make music with others, find community, and have unforgettable experiences.

In 2017, ACG published its **Five Elements Theory**, which has since become central to all training and curriculum. Partially in reflection on the findings of the 2009 UT social impact study, combined with years of observations of successful and unsuccessful teaching, ACG identified five elements that must be present in the vast majority of class periods if teachers are to be successful. They are, in brief: 1) Safety/ Belonging 2) Personal Responsibility 3) Perseverance/ small challenges/small successes 4) Performance 5) Celebration.

Our **Free Lessons Initiative**, which began in 2001, has grown considerably. We currently invest \$100,000 each year in lessons and free guitars for students in need, primarily in Title 1 schools. Many extraordinary stories of personal and professional transformation have resulted directly from this deep investment in individuals, including many graduates who have overcome significant hurdles to attend college and enter the workforce as musicians.

In recent years ACG has invested in new education positions, including Director of Curriculum and Partnerships and Education Project Manager. With over 250 active teaching partners across the country and beyond, ACG has relaunched its curriculum website with a new student portal and published six new method books since 2023. ACG hosts one annual teacher training summit in Austin each summer, along with remote summits in other states such as New York, Georgia, South Carolina, and Missouri.

With robust programming at the macro and micro levels, support for those in need, school and community-based activities, a theater with dozens of annual presentations, and world-class guest artists, ACG has developed a **pro-social ecosystem** yielding extraordinary results as evidenced by both data-driven reporting and many years of qualitative and anecdotal evidence.

Our Current ACG Education Model

DNA: The coexistence of inclusion and excellence. ACG Education takes a holistic approach continually assessing need, prioritizing community inclusion, and then applying material support and technical expertise in support of the ACG mission: to inspire individuals in our community through experiences of deep, personal significance.

Music First: A philosophy at the heart of the ACG approach which prioritizes “expressive, beautiful music-making from the very first day.” This is a revolutionary concept, developed specifically in response to established educational methods filled with non-musical pedagogical lessons and activities.

Five Elements: This refers to the psycho-social environment established and maintained by teaching partners to create a daily environment for students that is both emotionally supportive and conducive for learning. The elements are: Safety/Belonging, Personal Responsibility/Importance, Perseverance/Challenges/Successes, Performance, Celebration.

GuitarCurriculum.com: A subscription website for teachers containing a large library of multi-level group-instructional music and learning material, video and audio content, and student portal, all informed by Music First and Five Elements principles and scaffolding.

GuitarCurriculum Method Books: Printed volumes at multiple levels, student and instructor editions, with distilled and focused materials for classroom use.

Teacher Training: Finite group training experiences, usually in-person for 2-3 days, available several times per year in several US locations, with multiple tracks based on experience.

Teacher Support: Ongoing instructional support on a consultation basis prioritizing new and struggling teachers, and focused primarily in Central Texas, with remote options available.

Student Support: Free lessons and free instruments for Title 1 School students in central Texas, as well as performance opportunities.

District Support & Evaluation: Assistance with district strategy, material acquisition, and hiring as well as the development and administration of auditioned ensembles and Concert & Sight Reading.

Community Art-Making: Youth and adult community ensembles, classes, workshops, and camps, combined with an ethos of elevating and centering community music-making as a programming priority.

Caring Community & Engagement: A culture of individual support resulting in proactive support for students with special invitations, participation in community art events, access to top-level artists, and connection to community resources including college prep assistance.

Braille-based Learning: LetsPlayGuitar.org is a free ACG resource containing a 45-step lifelong learning pathway in Braille with accompanying instructional audio guides, available for use internationally.

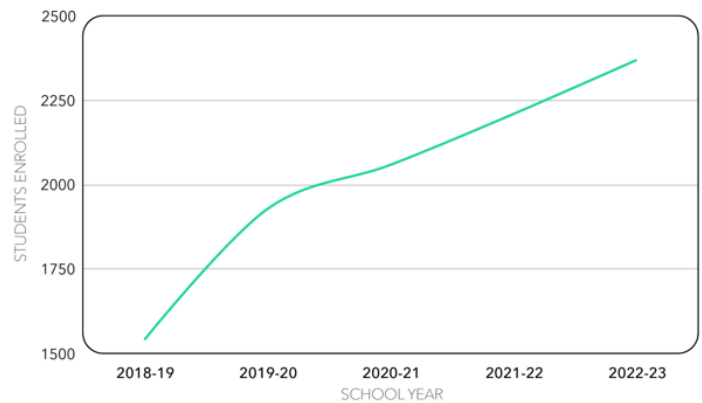
Juvenile Justice Services: In five Texas facilities, ACG Education serves incarcerated and court-involved youth through a ground-breaking program that navigates complex civic systems to provide service.

ACG Education Historic Results

Increased Fine Arts Enrollment

Since its inception in 2001, ACG Education has grown in Austin ISD from one class in one school with fifteen students, to having programs in nearly every middle and high school with higher enrollment than any other music class district-wide besides band. Austin ISD Fine Arts Director, Phillip Taylor, wrote: "As a large urban school district, we face many challenges in securing consistent funding for instructional support in fine arts classrooms. Fortunately, a partnership between AISD and Austin Classical Guitar has closed the access gap for our most marginalized students and teachers...The partnership with ACG has yielded tremendous results in recruitment and retention. Since my brief time in Austin ISD, I have watched our guitar enrollment grow tremendously and we firmly believe that is a direct result of ACG. Guitar is now the second largest music program in Austin ISD high school and middle school campuses."

AISD GUITAR ENROLLMENT



Visual & Performing Arts
Phillip Taylor, Director

July 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Phillip Taylor and I am the Director of Visual & Performing Arts for the Austin Independent School District.

Austin ISD provides fine arts instruction and extra-curricular programs to over 55,000 students. However, as a large urban school district, we face many challenges in securing consistent funding for instructional support in fine arts classrooms. Fortunately, a partnership between AISD and Austin Classical Guitar has closed the access gap for our most marginalized students and teachers.

ACG provides guitar lessons to hundreds of students, provides instruments to schools and students, and coordinates several districtwide music events, such as Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations. Additionally, they provide summer professional development and curriculum opportunities to new Austin ISD guitar teachers and elementary music teachers. This high-quality professional development opportunity trains teachers on best practices for a guitar classroom. ACG regularly checks in with guitar teachers across the district and often substitutes for or co-teaches with struggling teachers. Additionally, ACG assists in recruiting for teacher vacancies in our school district.

The partnership with ACG has yielded tremendous results in recruitment and retention. Since my brief time in Austin ISD, I have watched our guitar enrollment grow tremendously and we firmly believe that is a direct result of ACG. **Guitar is now the second largest music program in Austin ISD high school and middle school campuses** (first is band, followed in third with orchestra, and fourth with choir). Not only does this partnership expand interest in the arts, but it provides an affordable instrument option for students interested in becoming a musician.

ACG and AISD continue to work together to close the equity gap that exists across the district and city. Please feel free to reach out if you have any additional questions.

Best,

Phillip Taylor
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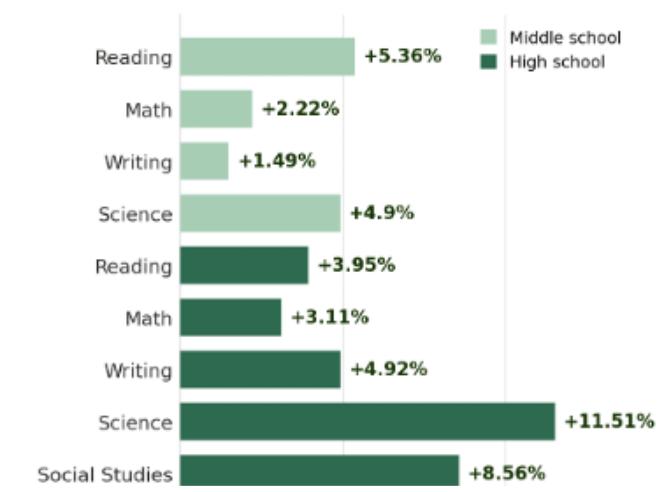


Improved Behavior and Academic Performance

Across 14 Title 1 campuses serving more than 1,000 guitar students, AISD data shows that guitar students meet the STAAR standard at higher rates than their non-guitarist peers in every subject tested, at both middle and high school. They are also suspended less often at both levels. These comparisons match students by campus and demographics.

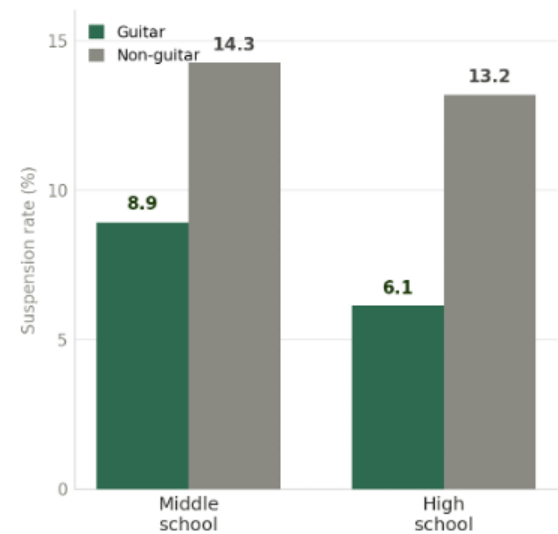
Guitar students lead in every subject

Points ahead of non-guitar peers (STAAR)



Suspended less often

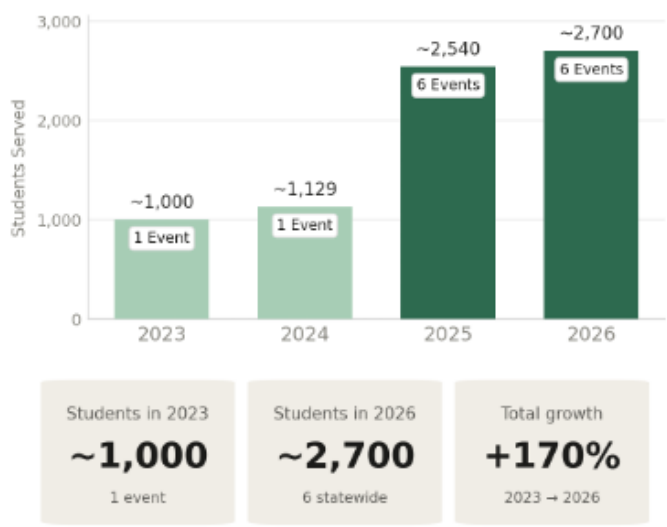
Suspension rate, Title I campuses



Evaluation Systems

Since 2023 we've expanded Guitar Concert & Sight-Reading events across Texas. **These adjudicated contests promote rigorous standards for performance and help districts assess program quality at the campus level.** In 2025 and 2026, our team administered Concert & Sight-Reading events in six locations: Austin, Brownsville, Edinburg, Houston, El Paso, and Denton.

Concert & Sight-Reading reach



Teacher Training Case Study

ACG Education fundamentals of **DNA, Music First, and Five Elements** apply not only to our interactions with students, but also to our interactions with our partner teachers and trainees. Consider this piece of unsolicited feedback from a New Jersey-based trainee sent one day following our northeast training in July 2026, and you will see how our attempts at deep, multi-level impact not only impart helpful pedagogical skills but also breed enthusiasm, loyalty, and a sense of belonging.

Dear Austin Classical Guitar Staff,

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the wonderful professional guitar workshop you all conducted, designed and implemented. I really enjoyed the thoughtful sequence of the sessions, the curriculum itself, and the passion conveyed in your work. I can tell there's a real sense of peace and love in the work you all do and I'm happy to have learned from it. I loved meeting so many likeminded professionals and colleagues and learned from their own practice.

Additionally, I appreciated the Spirit Economy presentation because I needed to be reminded of the profound purpose our work serves. Thank you Matt, beautifully done. I can go on about the importance of the training and I wanted to share my gratitude.

One thing I love about being a public school music teacher is that there's a beginning and an end. Each year is unique and I reflect on what I did well and what I can improve for the next year. The NYC Summit gave me a lot of material and assistance I can pull from to make my upcoming school year a great success. Thank you again. I'll be in touch throughout the year and hope to meet you all again.

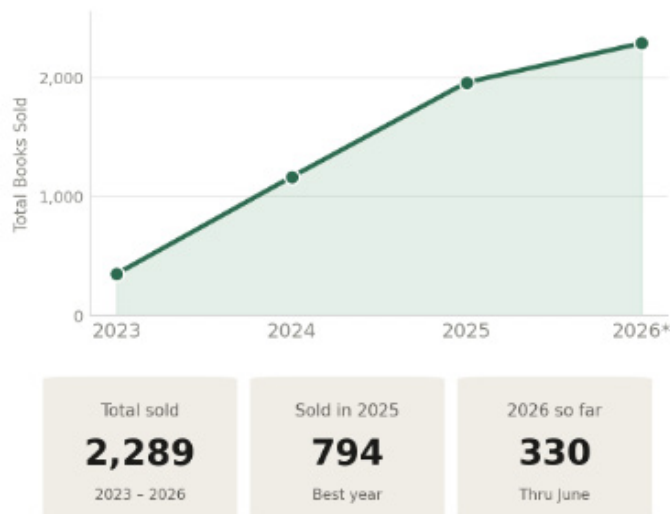
*Sincerely,
Steve Sabet*

Evolving Guitar Curriculum Toolbox

We **rebuilt and relaunched GuitarCurriculum.com**, our central teacher resource, making it faster, more navigable, and built to support the scale and replication we plan in the coming years.

In 2023 we created and published our first method books, which now include an Elementary edition and two editions covering eight levels for middle and high school students. Sales have grown steadily, reaching a cumulative total of **2,289 books sold** as of mid-2026.

Method book sales (cumulative)



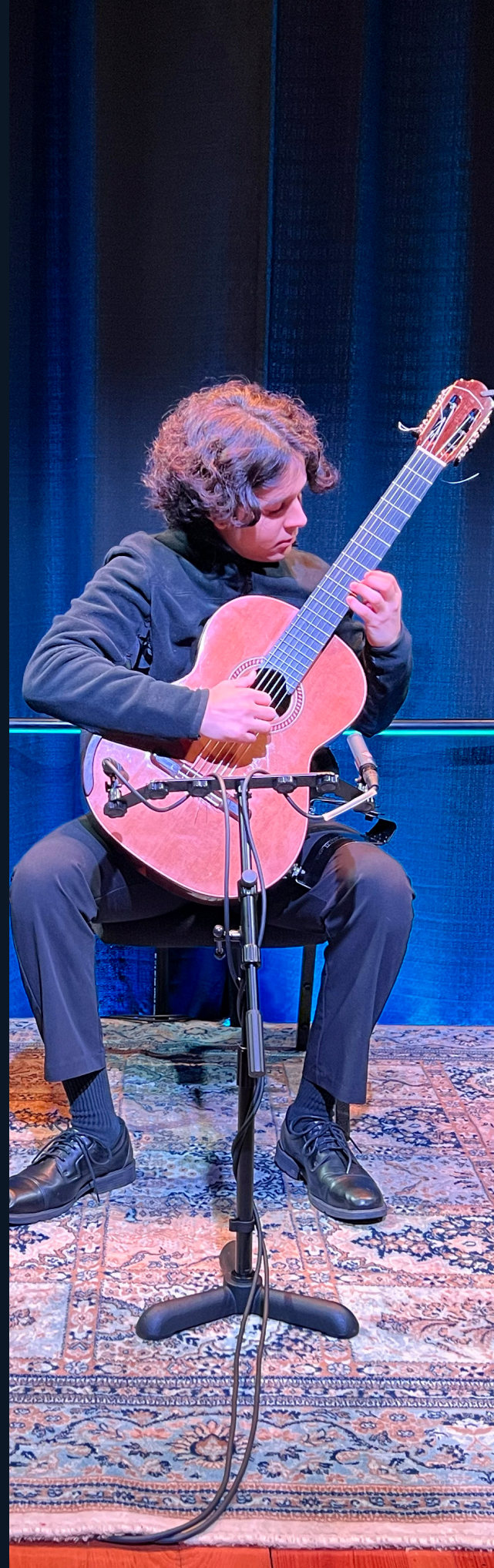
Guitar Education Institute

Successful Replication Snapshot

Replication of the ACG Education model begins in the classroom. A single successful classroom guitar program represents the fundamental unit of scale for GEI. The definition below identifies the essential, measurable indicators of a successful classroom program—elements that should be consistently present across all sites. While individual programs may possess additional strengths or unique characteristics, these foundational components provide the common standard upon which successful replication is built.

Foundational Indicators of a Successful Classroom Guitar Program

- Enrollment typically ranges from 12–30 students per class.
- Each classroom is equipped with a complete set of quality instructional resources, including nylon-string guitars, footstools or guitar supports, music stands, and digital tuners for every student.
- Students and teachers have access to GuitarCurriculum.com, and students are provided with method books when appropriate.
- The instructor has completed at least one GuitarCurriculum teacher training course and, in public school settings, has obtained or is actively pursuing the appropriate state teaching certification.
- The instructor demonstrates a level of guitar performance that allows them to model beautiful and technically sound playing at or above the level expected of students.
- The instructor is able to effectively rehearse and conduct a guitar ensemble.
- The instructor consistently implements classroom structures, routines, and procedures that create a productive, safe, and supportive learning environment informed by the Five Elements and Twenty Teacher Rehearsal Behaviors.
- Students consistently perform repertoire as an ensemble with accurate technique, musical expression, and proficiency in the skill elements defined in GuitarCurriculum.com.



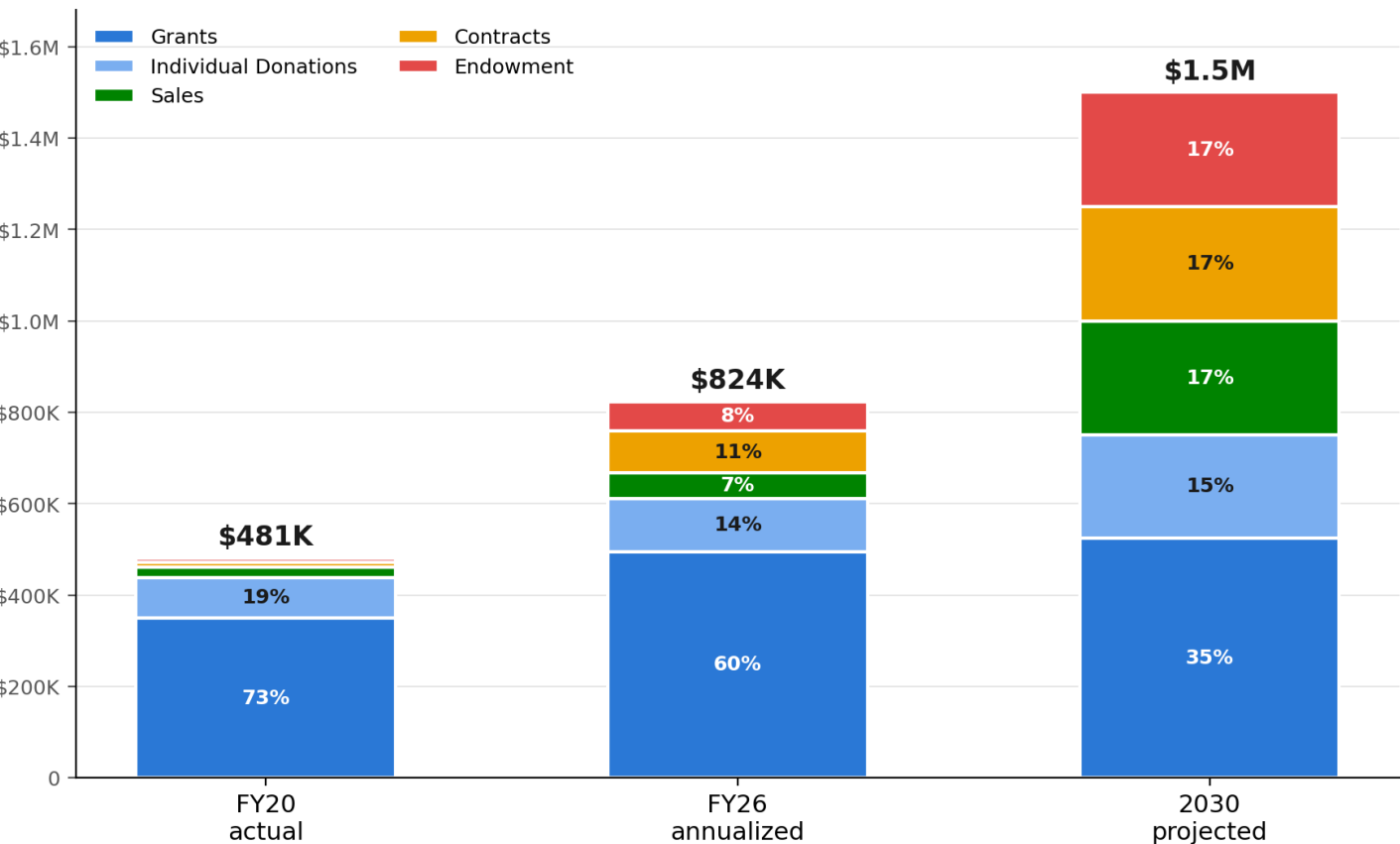


Funding & Sustainability

GEI has five sources of revenue:

- Grants:** Private Foundations and Government
- Endowment:** Goal is \$10M - to produce \$500K annually for operations (current \$1.3M)
- Contracts:** Consulting & training agreements with Strategic Partners: schools, districts, nonprofits, universities, governments.
- Individual Donations:** Unrestricted gifts from supporters
- Sales:** Subscriptions, Method Books, Summit Registrations

GEI is a new division within ACG Education; the current and projected figures below reflect the total ACG Education budget.



Numbers reflect total ACG Education budget; each bar equals total Education expense for that year. FY26 annualized from 10-month YTD (x1.2); endowment draw shown at annual value (\$65K, 5% of \$1.30M balance). 2030: \$1.5M budget, \$250K draw (5% of balance grown ~\$1M/yr). Individual Donations = unrestricted general-fund support balancing each year to expense.



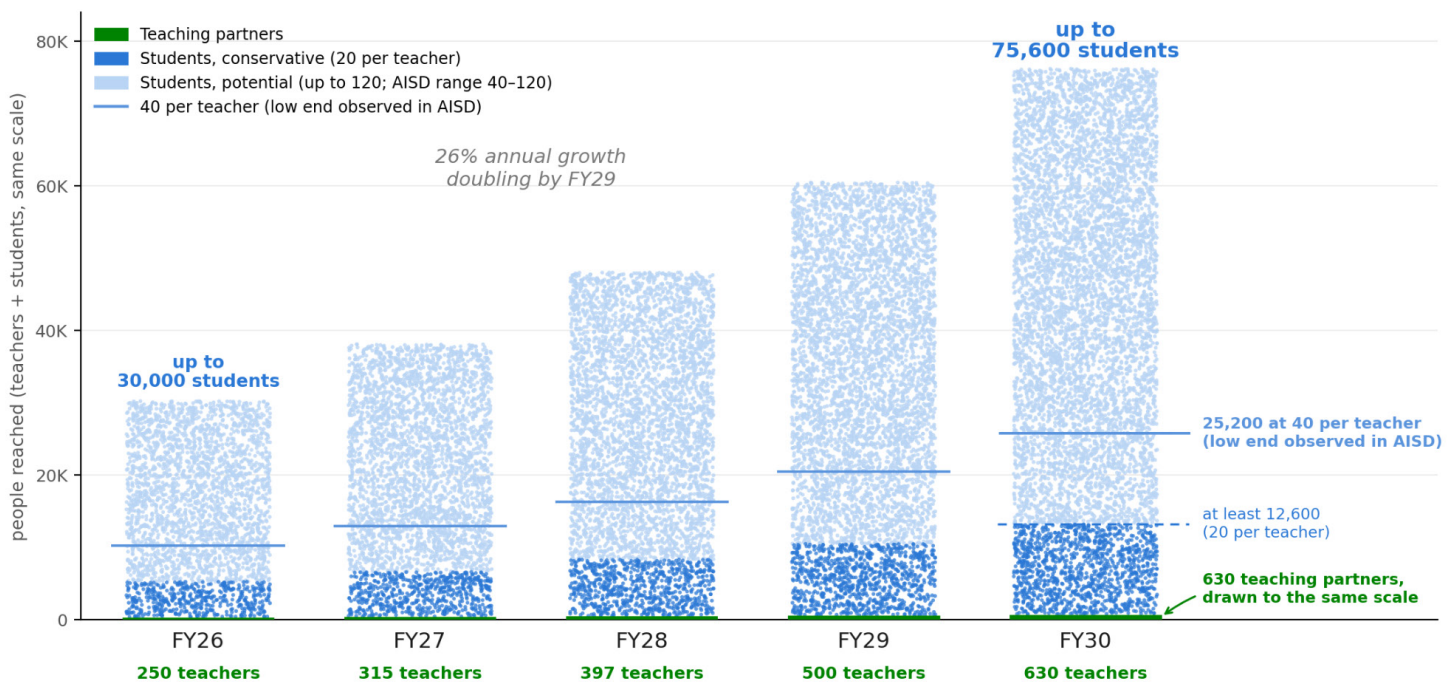
Staffing & Investment

GEI's first years are investment-focused. The plans outlined above, including four national summits, expanded professional development, curriculum and technology development, and higher education partnerships, call for a dedicated GEI staff focused entirely on scaling infrastructure, distinct from local program delivery. We anticipate adding approximately one new staff member per year as revenue grows, alongside contractor support for specialized needs.

During this period, expenses will grow ahead of earned revenue by design. Income from curriculum subscriptions, method books, and service contracts will increase as teaching partners multiply, but the infrastructure that fuels that growth must be built first. Contributed support and endowment funds will fill this gap, which is why the endowment campaign is a Year One priority. Earned revenue will carry an increasing share of a growing budget each year, as shown in the previous page.

The Power of One Teacher, Multiplied

Teaching partners and the students they reach, drawn to the same scale



One dot = 10 students; green bands = teaching partners at identical scale. Each teaching partner leads multiple class sections, typically reaching 20 to 120 students per year (40 to 120 observed in Austin ISD, where programs are mature and fully supported). The solid line marks 40 students per teacher, the low end of the observed AISD range. Teaching partners projected to grow 26% annually, doubling by FY29 — the pace set by ACG's three-year strategic target. A successful classroom program means a trained teacher, a fully equipped classroom, and students performing to the standard defined in the Foundational Indicators.

GEI Adjacent Service Areas

Private teaching and community ensembles:

GuitarCurriculum methodology could help private teachers and ensemble directors more easily accommodate players of differing levels. Ensemble teaching could add scale for private teachers, increasing revenue.

Nonprofit Management: As the largest entity of its kind in America, ACG is seen as a beacon for organization management in the classical guitar world. Frequently when ACG assists entities with educational development we are asked for assistance with organizational development as well. Our “Pro-Social Ecosystem” model could become a playbook and methodology for training. We also have resources in Matthew Hinsley’s nonprofit management books.

Juvenile Justice Services: There is great interest, especially philanthropically, in ACG Juvenile Justice Services. GEI could develop a tool specifically geared toward applying GuitarCurriculum to the Juvenile Justice arena. Subjects would include advocacy through layers of administration (state, county, court, probation, school) as well as best practices for interaction with youth.

Other Instruments: The GuitarCurriculum multi-level structure and Music First ethos could potentially be applied to other instrumental categories.

Consulted Models for Replication

Weill Music Institute: The Weill Music Institute (WMI) was established in 2003 at Carnegie Hall through a major foundational gift from longtime Carnegie Hall benefactors Sanford I. “Sandy” Weill (former CEO of Citigroup) and his wife, Joan Weill. The initial gift was \$60M followed by additional gifts totaling \$49.6M. The Institute was formed to expand the Hall’s educational reach, aiming to make music accessible to the widest audience possible by offering free or low-cost workshops, artist fellowships, and community programs.

The creation of the WMI allowed Carnegie Hall to institutionalize and massively scale its community and music education footprint. Over the years, this has grown to encompass initiatives ranging from the National Youth Orchestra (NYO-USA) to the Lullaby Project and Well-Being Concerts. Most similar to GEI is the Lullaby Project, the hallmarks of which are Pro-social Innovations which are tested, codified, and then shared at no cost (with occasional travel subsidies) with partners. Partners carry out related programming without direct oversight, but are invited to share results and participate in ongoing training and showcase opportunities.

UTeach Institute: Originally created at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997, UTeach is now replicated across 45+ universities nationwide by using the UTeach Institute. Established in 2006, the Institute drove expansion through multi-year implementation grants, highly specific curricula, and centralized coaching. The systematic replication process was driven by several key mechanisms: **The UTeach Institute:** Serving as the central hub, it acts as the primary liaison between UT Austin and other university campuses, overseeing ongoing evaluations and national grant execution.

National & Private Backing: Expansion was funded through strategic partnerships with the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) and various private-sector and philanthropic grants.

Cohort-Based Grants: In 2007, the Institute began issuing Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Selected universities received major grants (e.g., up to \$1.4 million each) to replicate the model over structured, multi-year implementation periods.

Standardized Curriculum & Materials: The Institute provided partner schools with streamlined curricula for nine core UTeach courses, alongside extensive instructional guides, videotaped activities, and student work samples.

Annual Conferences & Networking: The Institute hosts an annual conference in Austin to align new programs with the UTeach model, discuss national STEM policies, and share strategies for STEM teacher preparation.