

Intro to Music Primer:

A compilation of ideas to help you guide your child as he/she learns an instrument

Introducing Your Child to Music & Practice

What other activity outside of school education offers as much to your child as music education?

Music opens so many doors that the rewards are endless: the ability to concentrate, teamwork, commitment, poise under pressure, personal achievement, perseverance, enrichment as a person, appreciation of classical music, a big plus to getting into the best schools, endless scholarship possibilities.

If children are trained to be fine musicians, they will learn how to achieve success in any field they enter. How they approach and conquer a piece of music sets the standard for how they tackle schoolwork and other projects.

How parents approach music sets the standard for the child's motivation. The goal is to create the desire for self-motivation in your child. Start by fostering self-esteem and pride in their achievement. This leads to confidence, and confidence in what one is doing leads to the necessary internal motivation to continue. Confidence comes from knowing what they are doing and this is directly correlated to practice.

Children want to play sports that they are exposed to, sing what they hear, dance how they see others dance, speak the language they hear their parents speak. If you want them to want to play classical music on an instrument, fill their environment with music. In Mozart's time, very young children were only exposed to music that was played in their home by a family member.

Luckily, we do not have to be personally responsible to expose our children to good music. We can turn on the stereo and fill their world with Vivaldi concertos in an instant.

Listen to a wide variety of classical music, especially the pieces that your child is learning. Studies have shown that people retain what they read better when listening to classical music while reading. Combine quiet listening with homework.

Surround your children with good music, music that will inspire and enable them. The more they hear it, the more they will love it.

Children compare new sounds with familiar sounds from their environment. Asian music would sound strange to us if it is not a regular part of our environment. Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms can be equally foreign to a child whose environment does not include them. Show great enthusiasm for your child's music.

Point out how the 'stick with it' attitude and perseverance has brought success in all areas of your child's life.

Create a 'rosin read' environment, an EASY ACCESS TO PRACTICE. Music stands should be set up with all books and instruments within easy reach and the practice tapes, metronome, etc. ready to use, so all the child's energy can go into the practice itself.

Find something good in every attempt, and make sure that it is the first thing out of your mouth! Correct descriptively, not judgmentally.

Look forward to listening and helping your child practice, and communicate your pleasure.

Practice regularly, every day, seven days a week, even if it's not a long practice.

Try to verbally correct only one thing at a time, but other corrections can be gently done with touch (posture, scroll up, etc.)

Make charts, progress plans, "things to fix this week" check off boxes, whatever you can think of from any area of life that will help your child.

Sit down with your child after orchestra or lessons and make a weekly game plan. Go over any new music or assignments. Ask questions about what they felt was exciting, new, challenging, or difficult. Was there anything they were unclear about? Get answers to questions. As the week progresses reinforce the great strides made by effective practice.

Don't try to second-guess or direct the teacher, the child may know the notes or bowings, but there is so much more to be taught before the child moves on. Look to the long road, bad habits are best corrected now. In the future, the child will have to incorporate the structure, dynamics, vibrato, balance, pacing, and articulation into their music, so help them develop patience with their music now. Treat each little detail with importance, not just because it is another chance for praise, but because it is the details that make the beautiful tone.

Effective practice?

How does your child approach schoolwork? What ideas have worked for them with book reports, science projects, and daily assignments? Approach their music education in the same way.

During practice, what percentage of time is spent on scales, current pieces, orchestra music, review, bow exercises, study books, etc? Teach time management. Children often do not realize how much time they have and what it is spent doing.

As much as possible, involve your child in music activities with other children. Come on Monday afternoons and show them where they are heading. Ask one of the senior GGP students to talk to or mentor your child. If you find yourself caught in the black pit of practice woes, please call for help BEFORE it's too late. Sometimes the parent or child just needs a helping hand out of the pit, other times it's a real team effort, but well worth it.

Introducing Your Child to Music & Performance

THE PERFORMANCE EQUATION $P = p - I$

Performance = potential - Interference

Performance (P), the result you achieve, is equal to your Potential (p), what you are naturally capable of, MINUS Interference (I), your capacity to get in your own way.

TIPS:

- Potential is increased with practice.
- By reducing interference, your performance will more closely approach your true potential.
- Interference, like TV and video game traps, are lurking around every corner.

"PERFORMANCE READY"

When the amount that you have practiced is so great that you feel confident that no amount of interference can take away from the beauty of your performance, you are PERFORMANCE READY!

Countdown to Performance: "The Polished Piece"

STAGE 1

Introduction to the piece (learning of notes, rhythms, fingerings, bowings)

- A. Listening, both active (with music) and passive, to as many different interpretations of the piece as possible
- B. Memorization: ALL solos and concertos
(EXCEPTIONS: chamber music and sonatas do not need to be memorized)
- C. Intonation

STAGE 2

- A. Strokes, vibrato, shifting, articulation, dynamics, pacing, sound

STAGE 3A. Score study, history, balance, character, pace with ensemble

STAGE 4

- A. Stance, position with instrument, bow grip and arm, left hand, head, facial expression and breathing
 - Change the metronome tempo up 1 notch, down 2, up 2, etc.
 - Sing/Say the rhythm
 - Bow the whole thing on an open string
 - Do the whole piece in doubles
 - Leave notes/measures out. Play BINGO.
 - See which notes or measures say the most in the piece and cannot be left out?
 - Finger it without the bow.
 - Shadow play the whole piece without your instrument.
 - Write it out on manuscript, or even just some measures.
 - Fix only one thing at a time, but really fix it.
 - Dissect the piece, starting points, structure, repeats, and themes.
 - Make up stories or words with the same repeating pattern.
 - Start orchestra music from all the rehearsal letters.