

Parents as Partners

*The instrument of
our practice is love.*

*The end result is
not only the
beautiful music
performed by the
child.*

*It is also the
sounding patterns
of disharmony and
harmony in my
relationship with my
child, which become
a melody of their
own.*

*And isn't that the
best music?*

*--Susan Townsley,
Suzuki parent,
Westport, Conn.*

October Groups:

Oct. 14 and 28

- Flute
- Piano
- Violin
- Cello

Oct. 8 and 28

- Palmer Piano
- Viola

Oct. 13 and 27

- Pretwinkle violin

Oct. 28

- Parent Workshop

*Check with your teacher
for specifics.*

a publication of the Denison University Suzuki Program

Parent Workshop Happening October 28th

by Jim Van Reeth

Welcome Back! I hope everyone had a fantastic summer full of fun, relaxation and learning. By now you have figured out your fall schedules and have settled into the rhythm of the new semester. Parents and practice partners have accomplished the tricky task of fitting in private lessons, group class and practice time with all of the other family activities. Bravo. Keep up the good work!

Of course, Chief Schedule Coordinator is just one of the many responsibilities of the parent practice partner: it is a complex job. We cannot forget the responsibilities tied to the everyday job of the home teacher that are critical for success: taking notes and asking questions in the lesson, making sure the repertoire recordings are played (and heard), and striving to keep an open heart and mind, especially when things may not be going so smoothly. Our faculty recognizes the challenges and complexities of being a Suzuki parent and we want to help make the experience as easy and enjoyable as possible.

Please save Saturday, October 28th, 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. for the Parent Workshop that will be held in Burke Recital Hall while your child attends group class. Our very own Maryfrances Kirsh will lead this workshop session. Maryfrances has much to share from her experience gained while living on all sides of the Suzuki Triangle. The workshop will be informative, entertaining, and there will be really good coffee! It is a morning you will not want to miss. See you there!

Thoughts on Suzuki Parenting

by Mary Hawkins

You don't have to be a perfect parent, just a consistent presence is sufficient.

Sitting still takes more energy for a child than anything else. Let them move to recharge.

Listening to the Suzuki CD's is the most important thing you can do to help your child learn (it is also the easiest).

A little practice is better than no practice.

It's ok to say, "You know what, I don't feel like practicing either but let's see how far we can get."

Don't rush your child - allow your child to learn at his/her own pace.

Think of your child like a tomato plant - you can't yell at it to make it grow. Instead, cultivate a good environment for it to grow.

Let your child see how important his/her practice time is - don't answer the phone, balance your checkbook, etc. during this time.

Don't worry if your child is not the "best" musician. The life skills learned along the way are what is really important

Before you know it, your child will practice every day without you. You may find yourself missing some of that special time you had together.

Hints for Taking Notes

by Kaitlin Moore

A parent's role in the life of a Suzuki student is just as important as the teacher herself. You not only are the practice partner at home, you are the copious note taker in the lesson. Taking notes in lessons is very important and it will make practicing at home more efficient. While looking on the SAA website, I found a great article entitled "Taking Notes at Lessons" by Heidi Ehie, a Suzuki flute teacher in Seattle. She really explains step by step note taking.

Here are some of her helpful hints:

- Look for themes (What is the one practice point?)
- In review songs, what is the teacher's focus?
- How are new concepts practiced (Writing down every step is important!)
- Listen for cues
- Observe how your child learns. (Watch the body language, facial expressions, etc.)
- Keep the teacher informed of events that might affect the child in a significant way.
- How can we help you? (If you need further clarification, ask!)

The Segreto Family recommends practicing in the morning and using cereal to count repetitions. Their current favorite is Corn Pops.

Program Recitals:

❖ October 15

❖ November 12

❖ December 10

"Part of playing an instrument comes from sharing the music we make with others. Seeing and feeling the support of a friendly crowd makes the experience all the more pleasurable."

--Jim Van Reeth

Did you know that turning off your cell phone is a great way to let your student and teacher know that they have your undivided attention!

Flute Notes

by Linda Habig

Suzuki flutists and their parents both reap rich rewards from a nurturing and consistent "parent practice partner" relationship and the development of flute-playing ability. And as a teacher, I am privileged to observe and participate in the rewards, satisfaction, and happiness that result. In lessons, I urge parents to take notes as to specific techniques to be practiced, often have them try the actual technique themselves, and encourage daily "coaching" of their young flutists in consistent and regular practice sessions.

When parents fulfill this role consistently, the results in the weekly lessons are obvious. Regular "coached" practice results in steadily increasing ability, as muscle memory is developed, the embouchure (mouth and lips) is stabilized, tone becomes more beautiful, and overall playing is easier and more fun for the student. Equally or maybe more importantly, spontaneous happiness and fun surface at the lesson.

Some examples:

- (1) Students draw pictures of themselves playing their flute and of songs they are learning, and bring them to the studio for display.
- (2) Students and parents eagerly tell me of a new flute "game" or learning technique they've developed during the week.
- (3) Families share stories of playing for relatives, with siblings or parents, or in interesting venues such as outdoors.
- (4) Students are happy and eager to share what they've learned and mastered during the week.

How a Suzuki Child Brings Music Back into a Parent's Life

by Wendy Miller

(mom of flutist Eric Miller)

Why is it that as we grow older, so many of us allow the pressures of everyday life to take away the music we loved so much as a child? My flute was hidden in a back corner of my closet since high school. I would rediscover it with every move, only to install it into the back of another closet. When I had children, my husband persuaded me to dust it off and play for them, but even that was short lived. I found I could only play "The Wheels on the Bus" so many times before the tedium (and grasping hands of the toddler I was playing for) ended the session.

Now that has changed. With my oldest son now in his second session of Suzuki flute, I am finding myself drawn into regular practice right along with him. He challenges me to fix all my old bad habits. He revels in his ability to play by ear while I use the music like a crutch. He delights in our daily duets. And I find that I am enjoying our sessions as much as he. We've even agreed to get up early in the morning so we can practice more regularly (no small feat for a mother of four and a pre-teen boy!)

I chose Suzuki for my son because I wanted to give him the gift of music (just as my parents had given it to me as a child). I didn't realize that I would receive the gift anew.

Curing the Practice Blues

by Amy Mock

(mom of flutists Zoe and Kate Guiney)

My daughters love to go to their Suzuki flute lessons with Ms. Linda and thoroughly enjoy the sessions. They do not, however, have such warm feelings about our practice time at home. I have struck upon one or two things that seem to help us. On days when either is having trouble focusing or is more resistant to playing, then I suggest that she "blow the sillies out" by playing whatever and however she wants to play. This helps us to transition into the practice. Some days we need to do this periodically throughout the practice session. We all get tired of "Mary had a little lamb," or whatever tune we're in the midst of, so a little time for "improv" is fun.

For my 6-year-old it helps to have short, discreet pieces of the practice. Sometimes we agree on a set amount of time, say 5 minutes that we will spend on a specific skill or task – such as playing 2 or 3 notes of a song with each breath. This method achieves the same goal as agreeing on a certain number of repetitions. Of course, this must be followed by a short rest, or maybe I play the same thing so that she can laugh at how much better she plays than I.

Lots of realistic praise is a strong motivator, too – a practice I neglect too often.

a publication of the
Denison University
Suzuki Program

Our Mission...

...to create a positive musical learning partnership among faculty, students, and their parents/practice partners by following the philosophical principles and educational methods developed by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki so that children can grow into loving and respectful individuals who will have a positive effect on their world.

For more information about our program, please contact:

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Parents Play Important Role at Group Class

by Robin Brown

Group lessons have started! For me and hopefully for you parents, group lessons are fun and a great way to see your child use and expand upon the musical skills they have learned in individual lessons.

I smiled when I saw several students after the Pretwinkle group class coming out of Burton Hall joyfully practicing the "pepperoni pizza" rhythm on their arms. And it was great fun to hear parents and siblings saying "woo woo woo" when the students played noticeable dynamics (forte, then piano) in Twinkle Theme last Saturday!

Besides all the other benefits (e.g., getting to interact with other students), learning to play in a group setting - matching rhythm, pitch, tone, dynamics and bow changes with the other students - group classes

also help prepare students for eventually playing in orchestras or chamber groups such as duets or quartets.

Parent participation in group lessons, from helping Pretwinklers get violins onto shoulders to vocal feedback, is essential to your child's enjoyment and learning. Take notes if you see something that you think your child could use extra help with (e.g., a certain bowing pattern, playing in the "middle" on the Kreisler Highway) and you can work on it during practice at home or let the teacher know if it's something you're not sure how to help with.

Group lessons are a great time for parents to meet other parents, exchange numbers, talk about practice ideas/tips, whatever! You'll get to see each other at recitals and other Suzuki events into the future.

Parent Membership in the SAA

by Maryfrances Kirsh

"The Suzuki Association of the Americas aspires to improve the quality of life in the Americas through Suzuki education. We seek to create a learning community which embraces excellence and nurtures the human spirit."

--Mission Statement of the SAA

Your teachers in the Denison University Suzuki Program are all members of the Suzuki Association of the Americas. Membership is required to register our teacher training with the SAA. As members, we receive the American Suzuki Journal, are listed in an international directory of teachers, enjoy discounts on conferences and insurance, and other benefits. Membership makes us part of the Suzuki family.

We encourage you to become members of the SAA, as well. You are our partners in teaching your children and you, too, belong to the international Suzuki family.

I believe the greatest benefit to parents is receiving the American

Suzuki Journal. It arrives four times each year and provides insights into teaching, parenting, and the business of music.

Over the years, the journal has lost its dry, academic style. Now we can enjoy insights from a wide variety of teachers, parents, and other music professionals. We can learn and also enjoy the lighter side of what we do. I was just thumbing through the Fall 2005 issue and spotted six articles related to Suzuki parenting. It is a great resource.

I've attached an SAA membership form to our newsletter. We would love for all our parents to join us in becoming members of the SAA.

www.suzukiassociation.org