

10 Tips for Being an Effective Piano Parent

- 1) Help your child to be prepared for each lesson by assuming responsibility for enforcing a regular practice routine (preferably 5 days a week for real progress to occur). This frequently involves controlling extra-curricular activities so that there is plenty of time to practice piano.
- 2) Parents of elementary age children should plan to sit with their child during at least a portion of practice time at least 2 times each week.
- 3) Be punctual in arriving at lessons and in making payments.
- 4) Be sure your student brings all materials to the lesson each week. These should be kept in a canvas bag or portfolio, which makes it much easier to grab and go! **Even if there is no assignment in a particular book in a given week, that book needs to stay in the bag!** I will let you know when a book no longer needs to be in the bag.
- 5) Check your child's assignment book each week. Go through your child's assignment with him/her the day of the lesson. **If there is a question about an assignment, please call me. I have a copy of the student's assignment, and can help clarify a misunderstanding or unclear instruction.** Note the practice goals suggested in the assignment book. Practicing to meet these goals will help your child practice more effectively. By checking your child's book, you also can know how the lesson went. If your child hasn't had a Star lesson or a Wow! lesson for several weeks, there is a problem!
- 6) See to it that your child has properly kept a record of practice in his/her binder. Each day that a piece is practiced there should be a check for that piece. There should also be a record of approximately how long the practice took each day. This helps me assess how carefully (or not) the student is practicing, whether I am assigning an appropriate amount of material, and to assess how effectively I prepared the student for practice during the week.
- 7) Mark your calendar with recital dates, group session dates, festival dates, etc. Doing this at the beginning of the year will avoid confusion and problems later on. If your child cannot attend a group lesson, please let me know well in advance.
- 8) **Arrange to come to a lesson about 2 or 3 times a year, but not every week!** When you do come, please remember that it is your child's lesson, not yours! ☺ Please do not answer questions directed to the child, and try to be as inconspicuous as possible.
- 9) Provide a supportive, non-threatening learning environment to motivate and encourage productivity, independence and self esteem. Take time to listen to your child play and congratulate him/her on the progress being made!
- 10) If something is happening at home or school that is affecting your child please let me know. Please err on the side of letting me know more so I can be sensitive to the needs of your child.

Without parental support, no teacher can help children achieve the excellence of which they are capable!

The Responsibility of Parents

Excerpted from an article by Richard Chronister

This is where parents become important to success for the private music student. Regardless of how wonderfully exciting a teacher can make the music lesson, it is the student's home practice that determines success. The educational purpose of a music lesson is to prepare the student to practice efficiently at home. The drill that goes on during the weekly lesson does not happen often enough to allow for the sufficient accumulation of practice necessary to produce effective results.

Parents who enroll a child in private music lessons must share in the responsibility of creating a situation in which successful learning will take place. The responsibility of the teacher is to know that the student is able to practice efficiently at home. The teacher sees to it that the student knows what to do at home and how to do it. It is then the parents' responsibility to know that the child is setting aside time, daily, to work through the assignment the teacher has made. The parent sees to it that the child does his daily practice. The minimum requirement for successful progress is five practice sessions on five different days between lessons. The most exciting teacher in the world cannot be expected to inspire daily practice. That is far beyond reasonable expectation. Parents with the attitude, "If Johnny doesn't practice on his own every day, he doesn't deserve to have lessons," may just as well save themselves the trouble and expense of lessons. The few children who practice without parental involvement are **exceptions to the rule.**

This is not the end of the parents' responsibility. Music practice is one of the loneliest activities any child endures. His other homework often has daily feedback every day at school. Music practice does not. Parents can provide some useful feedback every day or two, even if they know nothing about music. One of the best questions a parent can ask is, "Show me and explain to me what your assignment is this week." An assignment that cannot be easily explained by the student is suspect and should be reported to the teacher. An assignment that does not produce a satisfying musical experience for the student is equally suspect. There should be a balance between music just beginning to be learned, and therefore not terribly rewarding, and music that produces the two goals of musical performance: an enjoyable physical experience and an interesting experience in sound.

Those concerned with creating more success for music students, both parents and teachers, must fight head-on the myth that only the musically talented can learn. Obviously, many musically talented children have survived music study and are

today's artists. We can only wonder at how many great talents never survived. More important is the vast number of students who, though not as especially talented, might have survived to enjoy music making at whatever level they were capable, if only the circumstances of their music study had not pre-ordained their musical demise.

The vast number of students capable of success includes virtually every student who ever goes for his first lesson on any musical instrument. Becoming musically literate and being able to participate in the making of music is possible for every child. The talented ones will rise to the top, as in any other endeavor, but there is music in every child, just as there is language in every child. Just as every child has the potential to speak, read, and write his native tongue, every child has the potential to speak (perform), read, and write music. Music is another native tongue for every child, one that is almost always realized in singing, but too seldom realized when playing an instrument is attempted. Learning to read and perform music requires, like language, competent teaching, studying, and practicing, not a special gift or talent.

Teachers have too often connected a lack of music learning to a lack of musical talent, and parents have too often accepted this as truth and discontinued music lessons for their children. Talent is not required to learn to read the relatively simple language of musical notation. Learning to read music requires only an understanding of musical notation and enough practice to respond to that notation with some degree of facility.

The particular nature of music study in America requires a unique cooperation of teacher and parent to produce success. When success does not happen, we must look to the teacher or the parent, or both, for the cause. The cause will rarely be the child or his talent.