

Denison University Suzuki Program
Practice Partner Pages
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“...That by creating a nurturing environment, any range of ability, discipline, and beauty within every child, can be cultivated to ultimately improve the human condition...” —Shinichi Suzuki

Be Present

How does your student approach new problems and challenges? How does your teacher introduce new skills? Make note of these strategies so that you can help with home practice and with other areas of your student’s life.

Practice Daily

Give your student a choice in the practice session:

You decide on the piece, she decides on the one point focus.

You decide on the time, she decides on the room. (Piano: she decides on the octave of the piano)

She decides on the piece, you decide the number of repetitions.

Listen to the Reference Recordings

Listening teaches our students how pieces sound, what type of tone to listen for, and the relationship between notes. An interesting side effect of listening is that we learn the importance of seeking out experts to understand how things are done. Students also learn this from us – by watching us read a book or watch a video on how to make or fix something. We are teaching them to be life long learners.

Environment

Are you being realistic about what you and your student can accomplish during a practice session? What you might be able to achieve during a session may be way too much for your student. The opposite is true as well. If everything is relatively easy, not much progress is made. According to Daniel Coyle in his book, *The Talent Code*, most progress is made in the “sweet spot,” where students can do correct repetitions 70-80 percent of the time. There is just enough comfort (I can DO this!) and just enough struggle to make progress.

Community

When my kids were in a violin tour group, we got into the habit of meeting at Chipotle for dinner after rehearsal. The kids would take the round table and we parents would sit at tables on the other side of the restaurant. It’s been 15 years and they still keep in touch with each other. Imagine my excitement when last week, three of my students and their practice partners met at the coffee shop for breakfast before group class. We are fortunate to be a part of this community. I urge you to connect with other practice partners in your teacher’s studio. Meet for lunch after group class, head over to the park after lessons, or host a “recital” at home with other families.

Mastery – Why do we focus on review?

1. It makes hard skills easy.
2. It gives us music in common to play with other people.
3. It helps us master the skills needed to play our instrument.
4. It builds confidence.
5. We can add more advanced techniques to mastered pieces easier than learning both at the same time.
6. We can have something to perform whenever we get the opportunity.
7. It strengthens our technique.

Assignments:

1. Was it easy or difficult to refrain from using negative words in practice sessions? How did your student respond to your more positive approach to practice?
2. Dr. Suzuki believed in teaching character through music. In what ways do you think this is achieved?